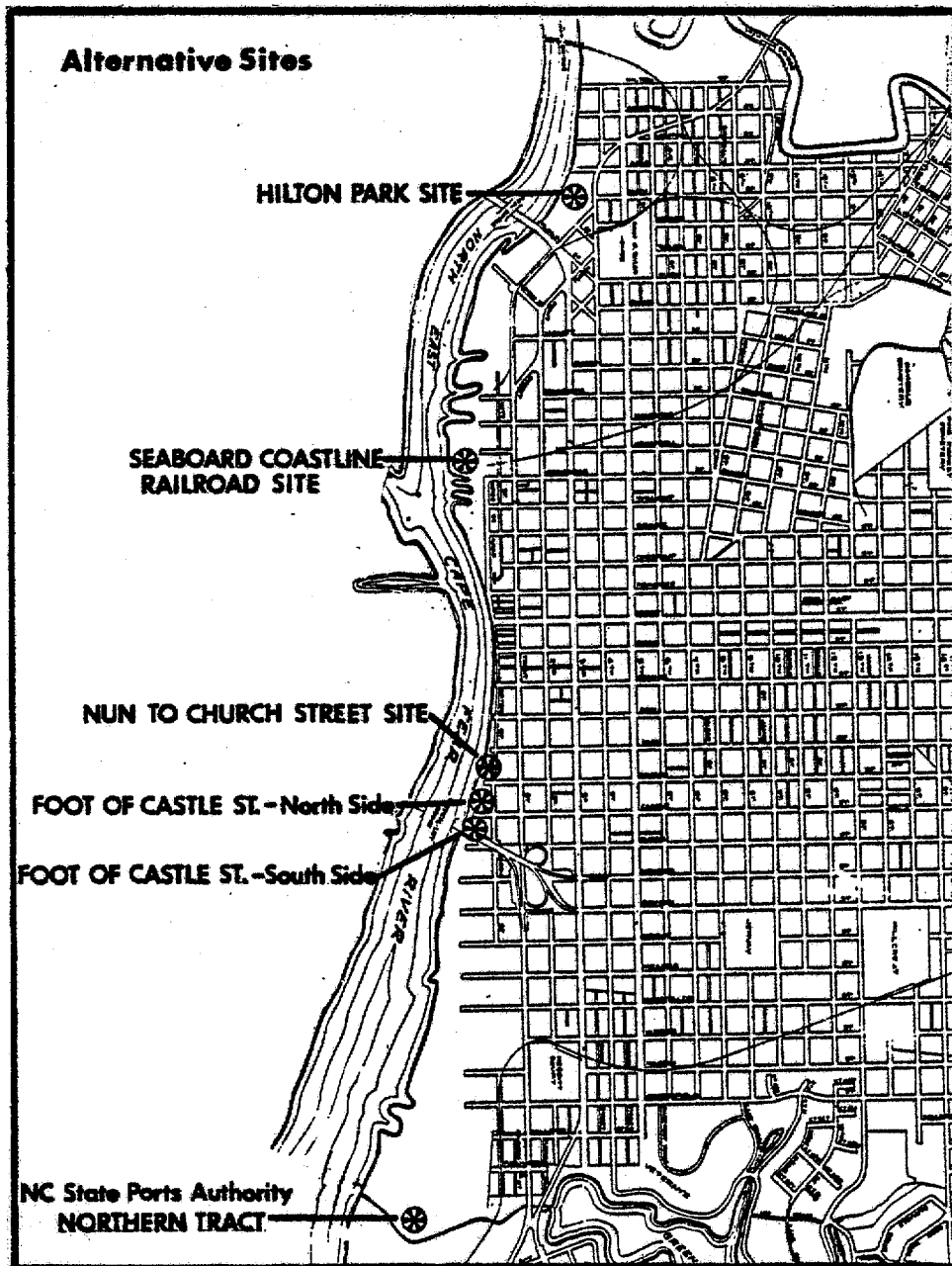


Boat Launch, Waterfront Park, and Fireboat Dock



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Wilmington, North Carolina

BOAT LAUNCH, WATERFRONT PARK AND FIREBOAT DOCK
WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA

PRELIMINARY REPORT:
NEEDS ASSESSMENT, LOCATION STUDY
AND CONCEPT PLAN

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JANUARY, 1983

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE NOAA
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The preparation of this document was financed in part through a grant provided by the North Carolina Coastal Management Program, through funds provided by the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, which is administered by the Office of Coastal Zone Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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ITEM NO. 23

CITY of WILMINGTON North Carolina

P.O. BOX 1810
28402

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER
(919) 762-4323

January 25, 1983

City Council
City Hall
Wilmington, North Carolina 28402

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

Attached is a preliminary report and resolution regarding the Boat Launch, Waterfront Park, and Fireboat Dock as requested by Council. The study includes a needs assessment, location selection, and conceptual plan for a recommended site. The report was prepared by City staff with a planning grant from the North Carolina Coastal Area Management Act program.

Of five locations evaluated, a site at the foot of Castle Street immediately north of the Memorial Lift Bridge was selected as the best location for the facility. The 4+ acre size of the recommended tract affords ample room for initial development as well as future expansion. The proposed facility would provide a transitional land use between the Historic District and the industrial area south of the bridge. Access from the street system is excellent as the site is only two blocks from the intersections of US 17/74/76, US 421 (Carolina Beach Road), Third Street and Front Street. Identification of the facility with the lift bridge will also aid first-time users in locating the launch. The site is well positioned for pleasure craft use, including the vessels of sportsmen, sailors, and Riverfest raft racers. Proximity of the property to the Historic District, Solomon Towers, and the downtown core makes it desirable for park use.

The proposed facility would include two ramps with catwalks, parking for twenty to twenty-five cars with trailers, and a combination tie-down and washdown area. A park-like atmosphere would be created by the addition of appropriate trees, shrubs, and signage, and by a waterfront picnic area furnished with tables, benches, grills, and trash receptacles. Lighting for security would include underground installation of power lines to avoid possible contact with sailboat masts.

While the conceptual plan provides for a fireboat dock at the site, it is not part of the recommended initial development plan. As outlined in the report, the total estimated cost for constructing the facility is \$92,000, without property acquisition and construction of the fireboat dock. Staged development of the total facility could take place as follows:

Phase I: Site Acquisition -- The current capital budget provides \$33,000 for acquisition; however, market value of the recommended site has not been established.


Phase II: Boat Launch Development -- Access road, parking, two ramps with catwalks, lighting, and signs are estimated at \$83,000.

Phase III: Park Development -- Landscaping, picnic tables, grills, benches, and washdown area for boats are estimated at \$9,000.

These phases can be scheduled according to the availability of funds. Financial assistance can be sought from sources such as the North Carolina Wildlife Commission and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The attached resolution authorizes the City Manager to proceed with the detailed plans and studies necessary to implement the plan and to submit applications for grants or other assistance for development of the facility. Passage of the resolution is respectfully recommended.

Respectfully submitted,


Robert G. Cobb
City Manager

RGC/dmc
ATTACHMENT

Date January 25, 1983

RESOLUTION ADOPTING A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON
BOAT LAUNCH, WATERFRONT PARK, AND FIREBOAT DOCK
FOR THE CITY OF WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA

WHEREAS, the Council of the City of Wilmington, North Carolina has recognized the Cape Fear River and its shores as one of the City's greatest natural, economic and community resources; and

WHEREAS, City Council has stated its commitment to the river through adoption of the six general policies contained in the 1982 report Wilmington Looks To The River: A Plan For The Redevelopment Of The City's Waterfront; and

WHEREAS, City Council authorized the City Manager to study alternative sites and to prepare preliminary plans for a boat launch facility; and

WHEREAS, the report entitled Boat Launch, Waterfront Park, and Fireboat Dock, A Preliminary Report 1) confirms the need for a boat launch on the Cape Fear River at the City of Wilmington, North Carolina, 2) evaluates several alternative sites and recommends the best site for the facility, and 3) presents a conceptual plan for development of the site; and

WHEREAS, the recommendations of the report, if carried out, would further the objectives of the waterfront plan. Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1) Council adopt this report which identifies the south side of Castle Street as the preferred site for a boat launch and related facilities.
- 2) The City Manager be authorized to proceed with detailed plans, studies and cost estimates required for site acquisition, taking into consideration the rights of Pacific Molasses Company, and phased development of the facility.
- 3) The City Manager be authorized to identify funding sources and submit applications for grants or other appropriations for construction and maintenance of the facility.

B.B. Hutton
MAYOR

Adopted at a regular meeting
on January 25, 1983.

ATTEST:

CERTIFIED TO BE A TRUE COPY

Clarice Hughes
CITY CLERK

Clarice Hughes
CITY CLERK

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SECTION 1: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Introduction

This preliminary report was prepared at the direction of the City Council of Wilmington, North Carolina. Funding for the study was provided by a local planning grant from the North Carolina Office of Coastal Management under the State Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) program. The project team was comprised of City staff employees from the departments of Engineering, Finance, Fire, Management Services, Parks and Recreation, and Planning.

1.2 Project Objective

The purpose of this report may be concisely stated as follows: to locate and design an easily accessible and convenient facility for the launching and trailering of small to medium-sized pleasure boats on the Cape Fear River in the vicinity of downtown Wilmington. Further, to create an aesthetic and functional addition to the urban park system along the riverfront as conditions allow. Consideration should also be given to providing a berth for the City fireboat at the site.

1.3 Design Features

The following features were established at the outset of this study as being desirable project elements of the boat launching facility:

- (1) Two to four concrete boat ramps with catwalks or piers.
- (2) Sufficient car and trailer parking and maneuvering space to serve the anticipated demand.
- (3) Convenient access from the urban street system.
- (4) Room for future expansion.
- (5) Limited temporary dockage space for boats waiting to be trailered or for those desiring a brief stop at the riverfront (not to serve as a marina, however).
- (6) Existing or planted vegetation to create an attractive park facility.
- (7) Other amenities as conditions warrant and funding allows (e.g., lighting, signage, benches, picnic tables, riverfront walkway, shelter, restrooms, refueling facility, waste pumpage tanks, etc.).
- (8) Possible berthing space allocation for the City fireboat.

1.4 Research Method

The preparation of this report generally adhered to the following research methodology.

- (1) Need for the facility was assessed by reviewing prior history and plans, by evaluating available fisheries and boating statistics, by conducting an inventory of existing area facilities and by contacts with area boating clubs and organizations.
- (2) Alternative sites were identified using aerial photographs, property ownership maps and a recent existing land use survey conducted for the riverfront.
- (3) Site evaluation criteria were formulated and the best site selected based upon the project objective, design features, and several riverfront redevelopment principles contained in the 1982 Riverfront Plan.
- (4) A concept plan for the selected site was drawn up based upon reviews of other plans and existing facilities, and consistent with the specific characteristics of the chosen site.

1.5 Conclusions

- (1) There is a confirmed strong demand for a boat launching facility on the Cape Fear River in Wilmington.
- (2) The best site for a boat launch is on the south side of Castle Street where it meets the river. Based on factors including site size, land use, street access, ease of development, and several site suitability characteristics, the Memorial Lift Bridge area was chosen as the best of six final sites examined.
- (3) The design of the boat launch facility should include two ramps, parking for up to 25 cars with trailers, sufficient room for vehicular maneuvering, courtesy docking, and a separate tie-down area, as well as trees and other amenities to create a park-like atmosphere. A berth and dock for the City's new fireboat should be included at the site as a cost-effective and convenient means of serving that need.

1.6 Recommendations

- (1) That Council adopt this report which recommends the south side of Castle Street as the preferred site for a boat launch, urban park, and fireboat dock.
- (2) That the City Manager be authorized to proceed with detailed plans, studies, and cost estimates required for phased development of the facility.

- (3) That the City Manager be authorized to identify funding sources and submit applications for grants or other appropriations for construction and maintenance.

SECTION 2. NEED FOR A BOAT LAUNCH

2.1 History

Throughout its history, the Cape Fear River in the vicinity of downtown Wilmington has been used almost entirely for commercial shipping purposes. Recreational boaters have been drawn traditionally to the region's sounds and the ocean. As pleasure boating has continued to increase in popularity, however, the supply of sound-side boating facilities has been outpaced by the demand.

The earliest record identifying a need for a recreational boat launch on the Cape Fear River near Wilmington dates back to the 1940's. At that time, design drawings were prepared for a launch with a series of finger piers at Hilton Park in the vicinity of the Sweeney Water Treatment Plant. There is no indication that the design was ever carried out.

In 1957, at the request of the New Hanover Fishing Club, City Council authorized several improvements at the foot of Nun Street. Numerous dilapidated wharves, half-sunken barges, and various other heavy debris were cleared away. The street was widened and paved for the full width of the City-owned right-of-way to accommodate boats and trailers. A "safety gate" was installed over concern that unwary motorists might accidentally drive into the river. Under agreement with the adjacent property owner, the site immediately to the south of Nun Street was also cleared, graded, and planted for use as an unofficial park. Records indicate that this project was completed and maintained in reasonable shape for a number of years. In recent years, however, the Nun Street site has received little maintenance attention, with improvements limited to occasional clearing of vegetation, and the installation of trash receptacles.

The 1976 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan for Wilmington and New Hanover County, prepared by Gardner Gidley and Associates, called for a waterfront park on the river stretching from Nun Street south to the Memorial Lift Bridge. While the plan included a boat launch at the park, it is not clear whether a new launch was intended or simply improvements to the existing ramp at Nun Street.

In 1978, a riverfront concept plan prepared for the City by Stone and Associates also called for a recreational boat launch, identifying the area near the vicinity of Castle Street as the desired location.

In 1982, Wilmington Looks To The River: A Plan For the Redevelopment of the City's Waterfront, prepared by the Wilmington Planning Department, identified the Hilton Park and Castle Street areas as possible locations for one or more boat launches with associated park facilities.

Also in 1982, City Council authorized the application and acceptance of a \$12,000 Coastal Area Management Act planning grant to prepare this report and design the facility. Concomitant with the planning grant application, Council placed \$33,000 in the City's capital budget for the purpose of site acquisition during fiscal 1982-83.

2.2 Fishing and Hunting on the Cape Fear

By all available accounts, the Cape Fear River in the vicinity of Wilmington is under-fished and under-hunted. While hard data on non-commercial wildlife catches is not available, interviews with area sportsmen consistently yielded this viewpoint. In addition, most fishermen and hunters stated that a lack of suitable access was a primary reason for the present underuse of the river.

Those sportsmen who do use the river at Wilmington are a determined group, putting up with hazardous launching conditions, no fuel availability for many miles in either direction, and frequent break-ins to their automobiles. (See table 2.2.1.)

Table 2.2.1
Automobile Break-Ins, Thefts, and Damage
Reported in the Zero Block of Nun Street
June 1979 to September 1982
(By Month and Day of Week)

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	
Jan							X	1
Feb	X	X			X			3
Mar		X			X			2
Apr	X		X					2
May								0
Jun	X				X			2
Jul	XX	X		X		XX	X	7
Aug				X				1
Sep		X					X	2
Oct		X					X	2
Nov					XX		X	3
Dec					X			1
	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	
	5	5	1	2	6	2	5	26 Total Crimes

Source: Computer printout of records maintained by the Wilmington Police Department.

Recently, fishermen have been observed parking their cars and trailers on Nun Street near its intersection with Front. This may be a response to security problems (i.e., frequent break-ins) to automobiles left near the foot of Nun Street.

Despite the conditions, a substantial number of sportsman/boaters continue to use the Cape Fear in search of bass, shad, eel, duck, and other wildlife. Fishing is especially popular during the Spring and Fall, with duck hunting occurring predominantly during December and January.

Statistics on non-commercial catches of seafood are not available. However, an examination of recent Marine Fisheries records for commercial landings provides some idea of the variety of fish found in the Cape Fear:

Table 2.2(2)
Cape Fear River Commercial Catches Summarized

<u>Species</u>	<u>1980</u>		<u>1981</u>	
	<u>Pounds</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Pounds</u>	<u>Value</u>
Bluefish	--	--	1,796	323
Catfish	178,038	56,253	181,893	63,476
Croaker	--	--	2,118	819
Flounder	--	--	2,392	1,510
Mullet	29,570	8,318	19,551	5,549
Grey Trout	--	--	7,419	2,437
Shad	45,486	23,469	52,911	32,778
Spot	20,746	6,228	7,086	2,159
Striped Bass	17,418	22,558	7,394	7,394
Sturgeon	2,841	994	--	--
Misc. Finfish	14,634	12,531	18,607	12,908
TOTAL FINFISH	308,733	130,351	301,167	129,353
Blue Crabs	767,235	153,448	810,075	169,240
Shrimp (Headson)	154,291	273,563	76,175	155,462
Clams	90,638	385,720	108,172	470,516
Oyster	5,873	6,908	5,024	5,627
Misc. Shellfish	3,995	811	3,450	708
TOTAL SHELLFISH	1,022,032	820,450	1,002,896	801,553
TOTAL	1,330,765	950,801	1,304,063	930,906

Note: Some figures for individual species are suppressed to preserve confidentiality of business enterprise.

Source: North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries.

Statistics for waterfowl hunting are not available, though duck hunting is widely reported in the extensive riverine wetlands north and south of Wilmington and along the Brunswick River west of the City. The New Hanover County chapter of Ducks Unlimited has roughly 225 members. An estimated 500 to 600 residents of the County are reported to be duck hunters.

2.3 Pleasure Boating

General pleasure boating on the river near Wilmington has picked up considerably in the past few years. The interest in boating seems to be paralleling improvements being made along the shore. Developments such as the Cotton Exchange, the Hilton, the Fishmarket Restaurant, and Chandler's Wharf are significant contributions of the private sector to the beautification and economic revitalization of the riverfront. The public sector has also taken an active interest with notable investments made along Front, Water, and Market Streets. Wilmington's Waterfront Plaza Park has reclaimed the foot of Market Street as the logical focal point of the City's riverfront. The new ferry landing, an integral part of the park, is a strong physical reminder of downtown Wilmington's historic ties to the river.

The U.S.S. North Carolina Battleship Memorial is a dramatic visual asset on the west side of the river immediately opposite downtown Wilmington. Some 250,000 visitors are drawn to the battleship annually. Active river vessels adding interest to the area include the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter "Northwind", numerous brightly painted working tugboats, the Captain J.M. Maffitt tour boat, and various commercial barges and ships. Collectively, these land and water sights create an interesting, appealing environment for pleasure boating on the Cape Fear. As improvements along the shore continue, there is little reason to believe that interest in river boating should not also heighten.

2.4 Special Events

Interest in boating on the river has received impetus from an increasing number of special events and festivals held on the waterfront. Large numbers of boaters are brought out during the Azalea Festival in April, the Independence Day Celebration and Fireworks display in July, and the Riverfest held annually in October. In addition, the Waterfront Plaza Park opposite the steps of the Federal Building now provides a suitable area for a variety of entertainment and cultural events. Since the park's dedication in the Spring of 1982, the plaza area has played host to craft shows, dance troupes, and a host of musical performers. Because of the open design of the plaza (i.e., the river provides a backdrop), these entertainment shows can be viewed from the river as well as from the steps of the Customs House.

Over the years, the Hilton Hotel has also developed a reputation for outdoor entertainment at its courtyard pool and hospitality dock. These activities are not limited to holiday or festival weekends, but occur increasingly throughout the year.

Even more important than these general interest activities are several annual events well suited for the boating public. They are separately discussed as follows:

2.4.1 Riverfest Raft Race

Raft races have been a growing phenomenon throughout the country in recent years. Wilmington held its fourth annual race in 1982 in conjunction, as

customary, with the Riverfest celebration. Each year the rafts vary considerably in size, shape, and level of design sophistication, as well as crew attitude about winning. The event is considered by many to be the highpoint of the annual river festival, providing as much entertainment to those on the shore as to those riding the 150 to 200 rafts which typically enter.

For the first three years of the race, the rafts were taken out and trailered at the foot of Nun Street. Problems of inadequate parking, steep grade, a poor ramp surface, no dock, and crowding spectators caused heavy congestion and were troublesome to raft race organizers. In 1981, the finish line was placed at the top of Nun Street (intersection of Front) in hopes of expediting the clearance of rafts from the ramp area. Problems persisted. In 1982, the finish line was placed at the Memorial Lift Bridge and rafts were taken out at facilities provided by Cape Fear Towing Company on the West side of the river, south of the bridge. The raft race chairperson has stated that the use of these or other private facilities are on a year-to-year basis with no guarantee for future use. A permanent public facility on the river south of the downtown would be of considerable assistance to future raft races.

2.4.2 Riverfest Invitational Sailing Regatta

A second special boating event held during the annual Riverfest is the Invitational Sailing Regatta. 1982 was the third year of the event with some 50 sailboats participating in six races. Regatta organizers have settled upon Hobie Cat 16's and Lazars for the event due to their popularity and interest locally. The boats and their brightly colored sails create a pleasant sight on the water.

Despite bad launching conditions, the sailors have continued to use the foot of Nun Street to float their boats. To aid in rigging the boats on the water, the regatta brings in its own temporary floating dock. Parking is cramped and maneuvering space limited. Yet, much like the fishermen who use Nun Street, the sailors tolerate the conditions for lack of an alternative launching area.

With regard to any new launching facility, regatta organizers made two design recommendations: (1) that the launching area be free of overhanging trees and power lines to allow for mast clearance; (2) that a dock or "beach" area be provided to allow for the rigging of the sails.

2.4.3 Power-Boat Racing

For several years during the 1970's, power boat racing was held on the river opposite downtown Wilmington. Events involved specially designed high performance boats capable of speeds in excess of 100 mph. The races were usually held in conjunction with the Azalea Festival, and Festival organizers typically made a small funding contribution to help promote the activity. An advertising booklet also helped raise money for the event.

Discussions with persons familiar with the races indicated that they were discontinued some five years ago due to the lack of a suitable launching area and the withdrawal of Festival support for the event. Concern about the launching area arose regarding possible and actual damage to the expensive boats. One boat owner estimated that it costs \$25,000 today to build and fit out a power racing boat.

Despite the stoppage of these races in Wilmington, the sport is reported to be gaining interest in other parts of the country. A recent race in St. Louis, Missouri, for example, reportedly drew over eighty entries with only the top 25 boats qualifying. In other cities, power boat racing reportedly has been used successfully for fund raising and as a promotional tool for tourism.

With regard to facility design, separate in-ramps and out-ramps were recommended to facilitate efficient launching and trailering of boats.

2.4.4 Fireworks Displays

Fireworks displays staged from the grounds of the Battleship Memorial across from downtown Wilmington have brought out boaters in increasing numbers over the past few years. In 1982, for example, fireworks were held on at least three different occasions: (1) during dedication ceremonies for the new Waterfront Plaza Park, (2) during the Independence Day festivities, and (3) during the Riverfest celebration.

Wilmington's riverfront provides an excellent location for holding fireworks displays. The Battleship Memorial, for example, provides a fitting backdrop for the Independence Day celebration. The location is well known and the view across the river is heightened by reflections on the water. Explosive sounds are also increased by the echo effects of the river surface and nearby downtown buildings.

If these qualities of the river site are enjoyable to shoreside viewers, they also hold special value to the many boaters who prefer to watch them from their anchored positions on the water. A boat launch in the vicinity of downtown Wilmington with adequate parking and lighting for security and safety would no doubt allow a great many more boaters to enjoy the fireworks from this unique perspective.

2.5 Registered Vessel Records

Tallies of registered vessels in New Hanover and Brunswick Counties compared to other North Carolina coastal counties provide additional insight into the demand for launching facilities locally. The North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries maintains statistics on full-time, part-time, and pleasure vessels by coastal county. These statistics are presented in tables 2.5.1 to 2.5.4.

In terms of overall numbers, New Hanover and Brunswick Counties rank second and third, respectively, out of the nineteen counties for which records are maintained. (See Table 2.5.1) Only Carteret County with its large commercial fishing industry, ranks higher.

More significant, however, are the individual county figures for part-time and pleasure vessels. Table 2.5.3 shows that New Hanover County ranks second, and Brunswick fourth in numbers of part-time commercial fishing vessels. Table 2.5.4 reveals that New Hanover County has more registered pleasure boats than any other County in the Coastal area. Brunswick County trails a close fourth, even with its much lessor population. These numbers are noteworthy, in that boats registered in the part-time and pleasure categories are more likely to be users of public launching facilities. Heavy use of the public ramps at Wrightsville Beach and Snows Cut support this contention.

Table 2.5.1
All Commercial Fishing Vessel Licenses:
1981 Coastal County Rankings

<u>Rank</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Number of Registered Vessels</u>
1	Carteret	3,927
2	NEW HANOVER	2,649
3	BRUNSWICK	1,991
4	Onslow	1,952
5	Craven	1,552
6	Dare	1,209
7	Beaufort	1,098
8	Pender	891
9	Pamlico	876
10	Hyde	429
11	Currituck	355
12	Martin	265
13	Washington	263
14	Chowan	233
15	Pasquotank	197
16	Bertie	168
17	Perquimans	128
18	Tyrrell	126
19	Hertford	68

Table 2.5.2
Registered Full-Time Commercial Fishing Vessels:
1981 Coastal County Rankings

<u>Rank</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Number of Registered Vessels</u>
1	Carteret	1,365
2	Dare	562
3	Onslow	406
4	Pamlico	299
5	BRUNSWICK	287
6	Hyde	236
7	NEW HANOVER	190
8	Beaufort	185
9	Chowan	99
10	Currituck	82
11	Tyrrell	75
12	Pender	61
13	Craven	46
14	Washington	35
15	Pasquotank	31
16	Bertie	23
17	Perquimans	17
18	Hertford	6
19	Martin	4

Table 2.5.3
Registered Part-Time Commercial Fishing Vessels:
1981 Coastal County Rankings

<u>Rank</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Number of Registered Vessels</u>
1	Carteret	1,482
2	NEW HANOVER	1,063
3	Onslow	828
4	BRUNSWICK	704
5	Dare	492
6	Pender	398
7	Beaufort	387
8	Craven	383
9	Pamlico	193
10	Currituck	177
11	Hyde	143
12	Pasquotank	98
13	Chowan	88
14	Martin	72
15	Washington	59
16	Perquimans	50
17	Tyrrell	47
18	Bertie	28
19	Hertford	16

Table 2.5.4
Registered Pleasure Vessels:
1981 Coastal County Rankings

<u>Rank</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Number of Registered Vessels</u>
1	NEW HANOVER	1,396
2	Craven	1,123
3	Carteret	1,080
4	BRUNSWICK	1,000
5	Onslow	718
6	Beaufort	526
7	Pender	432
8	Pamlico	384
9	Martin	189
10	Washington	169
11	Dare	155
12	Bertie	117
13	Currituck	96
14	Pasquotank	68
15	Perquimans	61
16	Hyde	50
17	Chowan	46
18	Hertford	46
19	Tyrrell	4

2.6 Inventory of Existing Public Boat Launches

Contrasting the number of registered vessels, are the number of public landing areas in New Hanover County. Figure 2.6.0 shows the locations of public facilities serving the Wilmington urbanizing area, whether on the river or sound. The map shows that boat launches rim the county to the north, east and south, but fail to provide access to the river on the west. The closest publicly maintained boat access point to Wilmington via water is the Carolina Beach State Park facility, some thirteen miles south of the downtown. Table 2.6.0 summarizes the general features of each facility as observed by field inspection.

Table 2.6.0
Inventory of Existing Boat Ramps - New Hanover County

<u>Location</u>	<u>No. of Ramps</u>	<u>Estimated No. of Parking Spaces</u>	<u>Special Features</u>	<u>Comment</u>
Castle Hayne at 133/117 Bridge	1	20+	Small bait & tackle store nearby	Loop road design, trees
Wrightsville Beach at Draw Bridge	3	75+	More use of signage than most other ramps	Reported to be the most heavily used facility in State
Snows Cut on Intra-coastal Waterway	2	50+	Pleasure Cove Marina Nearby	Ramps are not steep enough; causes problems at low water
Carolina Beach State Park	2	50+	Fuel pumps, wash-down area, ice, paved parking, \$2.00 fee	Ramps are too steep
Fort Fisher	2	35+	Bulkhead-enclosed launching basin	Congested maneuvering near ramps

Note: With the exception of the Carolina Beach State Park facility, all launches are owned and maintained by the North Carolina Wildlife Commission.

Inspections of the existing facilities revealed several noteworthy points. First, a proper slope for the boat ramp is important. If the ramp is too steep, vehicles must struggle to pull the trailer out or back it in. If the incline is too gentle, the trailer may not reach into deep enough water to facilitate trailering or launching. Second, parking, maneuvering and tie-down areas must be logically designed and be clearly identifiable to the first-time user. A simple, rational traffic flow and parking scheme will be the easiest for the boating public to identify and follow. Appropriate, attractive signage can aid in the safe and efficient use of the facility. Caution must be used to avoid unnecessary sign overkill, however, if the launch area is also to be an aesthetically pleasing addition to the urban park system. Appropriately placed trees and vegetation can provide useful relief from the large expanses of parking lots. "Parking-spaces-per-ramp" ratios generally worked out to be 20 to 25 spaces per individual ramp, though there was no hard and fast rule. The Carolina Beach State Park facility appeared to be underutilized, apparently due to restrictions on the hours of park operation.

2.7 Summary of Need

Based on the foregoing assessment of prior plans, fishing and hunting statistics, boating activities, vessel records, and inventory of existing launching facilities, a clear need for a boat launch serving the City of Wilmington is established.

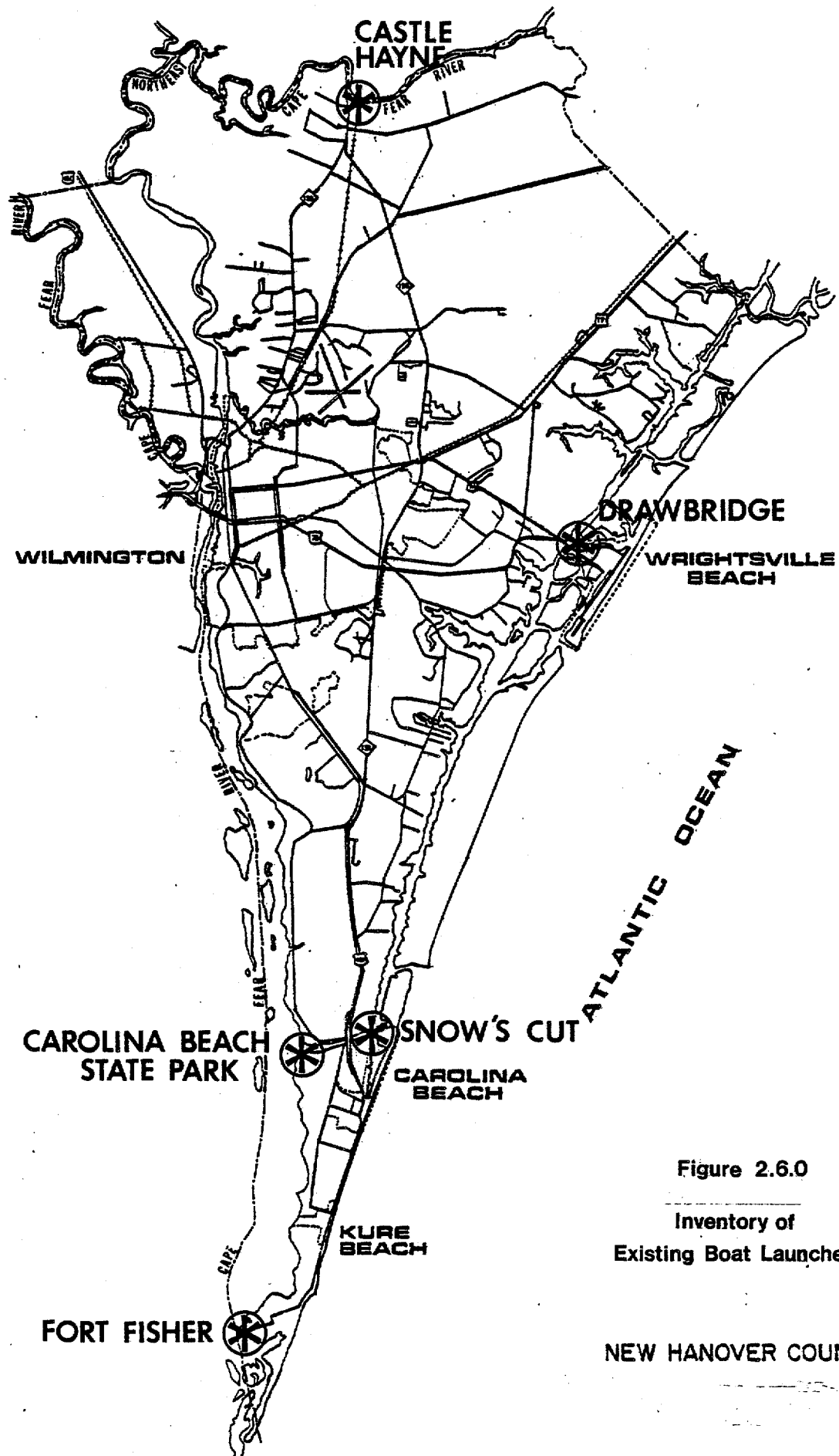


Figure 2.6.0

Inventory of
Existing Boat Launches

NEW HANOVER COUNTY

SECTION 3: SITE EVALUATION CRITERIA

3.1 Capsule Listing of Criteria

Based upon the project objective and elements, several evaluation criteria were established for the ranking of the sites and selection of the best site. They are listed below and separately discussed on the pages that follow. The criteria are then applied to site evaluations in Section 4.

- (1) Site Size and Future Expansion Potential
- (2) Land Use Compatibility
- (3) Access From the Street System
- (4) Suitability of Location for Pleasure Craft Use
- (5) Suitability of Site for Use as a Park
- (6) Contribution to Riverfront Redevelopment
- (7) Site Availability and Acquisition
- (8) Ease of Site Preparation and Construction
- (9) Suitability for Fireboat Location
- (10) Alternative Use of the Property

3.1.1 Site Size and Future Expansion Potential

As a general rule, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission officials recommend an optimal site size of one to two acres for their boat launching areas. This amount of acreage allows adequate space for the ramp, parking and maneuvering, etc. The actual amount of land developed and put in use will vary according to the demand placed upon the particular facility at a particular location. Acreage over and above the one to two acre size is desirable for future expansions of the launch and parking areas. Extra space can also be used for associated activities such as the development of a park, fuel and supply services, rest rooms, wash down area, etc. Investments in some non-essential services are best left undone until after a clear need has been established. Nonetheless, areas should be set aside in the master development plan to conveniently accommodate these services at some future point perhaps, provided sufficient acreage is available.

3.1.2 Land Use Compability

A boat launching facility is a unique land use which requires special attention to its relationship to adjacent land activities. While a boat launch is often perceived as a recreation or park-type use, the clanging of empty trailers, and the sound of outboard engines and four wheel drive vehicles can create considerable noise levels at times. These noises can be disruptive to nearby residential development, particularly if the facility is used late at night or early in the morning by sportsmen.

Conversely, boaters should ideally have the use of a pleasant launching area free of incompatible commercial and industrial activities.

In most instances, the location of the facility and specific layout of its component parts will be best determined by the site size, topography, and natural and man-made features. Sensitivity of site design in densely developed areas of the city becomes particularly important for this reason.

3.1.3 Access From the Street System

Cars or trucks towing boats and trailers should have convenient, straight-forward access to the launching facility free of numerous turns, traffic lights, excessive grades, and traffic congestion. Ideally, the facility should be a short distance from a major traffic artery, perhaps in view of the larger road. The major anticipated routes to the boat launch should not traverse residential neighborhoods or congested commercial areas such as the central business district.

3.1.4 Suitability of Location For Pleasure Craft Use

Boaters using the launching facility will likely include fishermen, hunters, sailors, raft racers, and pleasure cruisers. The location of the selected site will in some measure determine which of these potential users will benefit most from the facility.

Fishermen and hunters, for example, are known to travel considerable distances north and south of the existing Nun Street site for their catches. These two groups are therefore less "location sensitive" than the other user groups. Sailors currently use the Nun Street site almost exclusively for their river regattas, and would likely favor a similar location within a reasonable distance of the downtown waterfront. Raft racers are in need of a take-out point a short distance beyond the finish line of the annual Riverfest competition. Because the finish line must be located south of the downtown core (for viewing purposes), site selection for use by the raft racers is more limiting. Finally, pleasure cruising boaters are likely to be more flexible in their locational requirements. Even so, a central location would probably be favored in light of fireworks displays and other special events held at the downtown core.

3.1.5 Suitability of Site for Use as a Park

A secondary objective identified by the project statement is to create, if possible, a useful addition to the City's urban parks system. Several questions may be asked to determine the suitability of a given site for use as a public park: Is the site of sufficient size to accommodate park facilities in addition to the boat launch? Do the site's topography and natural features lend themselves to park development? Is the site appropriately located with regard to residential areas and/or employment centers? Does the site relate well to other park and open space areas in the vicinity? Are adjacent land uses compatible with park development?

3.1.6 Contribution To Riverfront Development

In recent years, Wilmington has witnessed substantial improvements in development along its riverfront. If properly designed and located, a boat launch could effectively contribute to that redevelopment effort.

Since about 1976, for example, the riverfront has seen investments made at Chandler's Wharf, the Fishmarket Restaurant, the Cotton Exchange, and most recently at the new Waterfront Plaza Park. The area of the river shore between the Memorial Lift Bridge on the south and the Seaboard Coastline Railroad property to the north of the central business district is generally considered to be the most important area for redevelopment. Therefore, any boat launch site falling within this area should be viewed more favorably than sites located outside those bounds.

One of the specific ways that a boat launch could contribute to riverfront redevelopment would be to create another activity center to help bring people back to the river. The much-discussed riverfront walkway could also be tied into the boat launching area. Boaters visiting the area could then tie up at courtesy docking provided at the boat launch, and walk to the downtown or other points of interest.

3.1.7 Site Availability and Acquisition

Presently, the City of Wilmington does not own waterfront property of sufficient acreage and suitability to accommodate a boat launch and urban park facility. For construction of the boat launch, fee simple acquisition of an appropriate site is recommended. The ease with which such acquisition is accomplished is dependent upon a variety of factors including number of property owners involved, whether the title is clear or clouded, whether the property owner is amenable to the sale, etc. In addition, the relative value of each of the alternative sites being considered may vary according to existing site conditions and improvements, depth of the river channel offshore, general location, available utilities, access, etc.

A detailed assessment of these various factors for each of the alternative sites is not feasible within the context of this report. The following information is provided, however, to indicate a range of prices paid per acre for property fronting on the river. These prices were provided with the consent of a qualified appraiser who confirmed these sales and used them in the preparation of property value appraisals in the recent past.

<u>Location</u>	<u>Size</u>	<u>Price/Acre</u>
South of Castle Street (East Bank)	9.8 Acres	\$12,545.00
North of Castle Street (East Bank)	79.5 Acres	13,208.00
South of Castle Street (East Bank)	31.0 Acres	19,000.00
South of Castle Street (East Bank)	46.3 Acres	15,815.00
South of Castle Street (East Bank)	31.8 Acres	27,000.00
North of Castle Street (West Bank)	1.25 Acres	15,000.00

The figures do not necessarily coincide with the potential values of any of the alternative boat launch sites under consideration in this report. They are presented for general information purposes only and are not intended to be a substitute for a formal appraisal report.

3.1.8 Ease of Site Preparation and Construction

Fundamental to the selection of any site will be the degree of difficulty involved in preparing the site for development, and then actually constructing the facility. The ease with which a site can be developed can vary considerably depending upon existing site conditions prior to construction. Variables can include; for example: clearance of vegetation as necessary; grading and leveling of the site to accommodate parking and other activities; construction of an access road as necessary; dredging and bulkheading the waterfront area to provide sufficient depth in and around the ramp area, etc.

Consideration should also be given to the ongoing maintenance that may be required due to nearshore siltation of dredged areas or onsite settling of previously placed fill materials.

3.1.9 Suitability for Fireboat Berth

The Fire Department is in need of a permanent berth for the City's new fireboat. Currently, the boat is temporarily docked at facilities provided by Almont Shipping Company. While a dock for the fireboat is not considered an integral element of the boat launching facility, it is felt that a cost savings could result if both needs were to be met through the acquisition of a single suitable site.

The Fire Chief has indicated that there are two primary considerations in determining a berth for the fireboat. First, adequate water depth is required. Since the boat will have a draft of four feet fully loaded, a minimum depth of five feet of water at mean low tide is necessary. The extra foot of clearance is to provide for adequate depth during extreme low tide conditions. Second, since the fireboat is normally operated by a land based company of men dispatched from Fire Headquarters, sites closest to the headquarters station should be given higher priority. The advantages of a close-at-hand berth for the fireboat include ease of daily maintenance and accessibility, and reduced response time in emergency operations.

3.1.10 Alternative Uses of the Property

From a larger perspective, a boat launch is just one of many viable uses for waterfront property. In planning for the development of Wilmington's riverfront, the City must consider all potential alternative uses for the sites being considered. While a site may be well suited for use as a public boat launch, it may be even better suited for some other alternative use.

Identification of potential alternative uses for a given site requires an examination of historical use of the property, its present use, known proposed uses, the surrounding land use and development pattern, existing and proposed zoning, and existing site conditions. Each of these considerations will receive different degrees of importance depending upon the circumstances of the particular site in question. The six general policies contained in the 1982 Riverfront Plan provide guidance as to how these factors should be applied.

SECTION 4: SITE SELECTION

4.1 Initial Screening to Six Sites

At the outset of the site selection process, the widest possible range of alternative locations was considered. Sources of information included aerial photographs of the river corridor, and land use and property ownership surveys conducted for the recently completed riverfront redevelopment plan. Prior plans and studies were also reviewed for applicable findings and recommendations.

From this initial reconnaissance, the field was then narrowed to six primary sites for comparative evaluation. All sites chosen fall within the City limits and all but one meet the minimum acreage requirements recommended by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. Moving from north to south along the shoreline, the six sites are as follows:

- (1) Hilton Park Site -- approximately fifteen acres in private ownership, so named because of the proximity of this property to the City's Hilton Park.
- (2) Seaboard Coastline Railroad Site -- approximately three-quarters of an acre in railroad company ownership located behind the old warehouses just north of Cape Fear Technical Institute.
- (3) Nun to Church Street Site -- approximately one and three-quarter acres in private ownership, located generally at the foot of Nun Street and including vacant property south along the river to Church Street.
- (4) Castle Street Site - North Side of Street -- approximately two and one-half acres owned by Carolina Power and Light Company located just north of Castle Street.
- (5) Castle Street Site - South Side of Street -- consists of some four acres of property at the Memorial Lift Bridge owned by the Pacific Molasses Company (Sucrest).
- (6) N.C. State Ports Authority Northern Tract -- a large tract consisting of some 40+ acres of wooded land located north of the Greenfield Lake outfall canal. It is owned by the NCSPA.

Figure 4.1.0 shows the locations of these sites in the city.

4.2 Site Evaluations

In the pages that follow, each of the six sites identified is evaluated in succession according to the ten criteria established in Section 3. An evaluation matrix is then presented summarizing the individual findings for each site and selecting the best site.

4.2.1 Hilton Park Site

(1) Site Size and Expansion Potential

With roughly 15 acres, this site is the second most extensive of the six properties being considered. However, the topographic conditions of the site and competition from other uses may constrain the amount of space available for a boat launch. Steep slopes to the east and low-lying areas along the river to the west effectively remove major sections of the property from the supply of buildable land. The junction of the proposed Smith Creek Parkway with the new bridge will consume much of the southern end of the tract. Planned expansions of the City's Sweeney Water Treatment Plant complex call for the use of the northern end of the site. Construction of an access road into the property would use up some of the remaining land.

In short, existing conditions and planned or required improvements leave a relatively small parcel of buildable land compared to the full 15 acres originally identified. In light of other factors working against this site (to be explained in ensuing paragraphs), a precise delineation of buildable sections of the site would not be worthwhile at this time.

(2) Land Use Compatibility

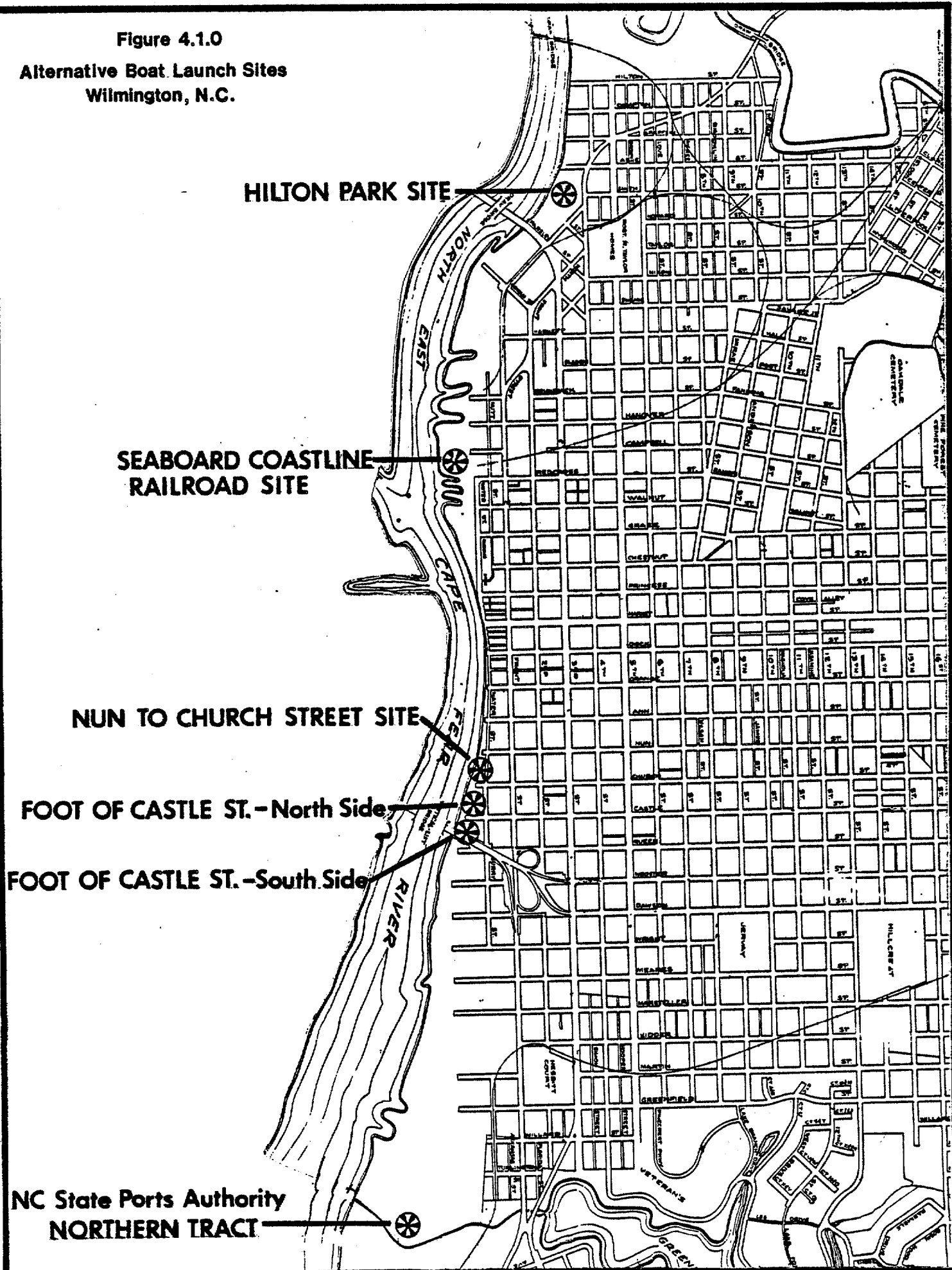
This site is generally isolated from other potential conflicting land uses. To the immediate north of the site is the City's Sweeney Water Treatment complex, consisting of a number of masonry structures and storage tanks in a quiet, park-like environment. Hilton Park is contained in the area. The northern end of the site's eastern border is bounded by several small wooded tracts of land while the southern half of the eastern property line runs alongside US 117/Castle Hayne Road. Several scattered wholesale and distributive type land uses largely define the character of the road as it passes by the site. A rail line and the new bridge meet to form the southern border of the site. The former A&P, now a wholesale supply and equipment store, is located atop a bluff separated from the site by the rail line. The Northeast Cape Fear River completes the perimeter of the site on the west. None of these adjacent land uses are expected to be affected positively or negatively by the boat launch, nor would the boat launch negatively impact any of its potential neighboring uses.

(3) Access From the Street System

Immediate access to the site is via North Fourth Street from US 117/NC 133 (Castle Hayne Road). There is currently no maintained road into the site from Fourth Street, however. General approaches to the area are good from the west (new four lane bridge) and north (Castle Hayne Road). Approaching the site from the south or east entails traveling through downtown Wilmington, though entirely on major streets.

In general, approaches to the site pose little or no difficulty, but construction of an access road onto the site would be a costly necessity.

Figure 4.1.0
Alternative Boat Launch Sites
Wilmington, N.C.



(4) Suitability of Location for Pleasure Craft Use

The suitability of this site for pleasure craft use is fair to good. Being the northernmost of the six sites, this location provides good access to prime duck hunting wetlands north of the city. Obviously, access to wildlife areas downstream of the city is less convenient. While the confluence of the Cape Fear and Northeast Cape Fear Rivers is only about one mile to the south, the mouth of the Brunswick River as it meets the Cape Fear is a full five miles downstream.

The site is also approximately 1-1/4 miles from the Battleship Memorial and the downtown activity center. While the new US 117/NC 133 bridge is between the site and the downtown, clearances are adequate to accommodate small sailing vessels without raising the bridge.

This location would be unsuitable as a pull-out point for the raft race unless the direction of the race were changed to coincide with the incoming tide. This would enable race participants to pass the downtown reviewing area en route to the finish line and pull-out area. The likelihood of changing the direction of the race is not known.

(5) Suitability For Use as a Park

As stated in the 1982 Wilmington Riverfront Plan, park development of this site is supported by "...the variable, wooded topography of the property, by the need for an attractive visual enhancement at the north entrance to the city, by the floodprone nature of the site, and by the site's proximity to Hilton Park." (p. 13). While the property is not located within any major population or employment centers, the Brooklyn neighborhood area lies generally 1/2 to 1 mile southeast of the site. There are no other major park facilities in the northwest corner of the city.

(6) Contribution to Riverfront Redevelopment

The site is not located within the primary area of interest for redevelopment. As noted above, however, development of the property as a park could do much toward improving the visual appearance of this sector of the city, particularly as viewed from the new bridge.

(7) Site Availability and Acquisition

As mentioned under (1) above, plans have been prepared for construction of the Smith Creek Parkway over the south end of this property and for an expansion of the City's water treatment plant complex on the north end. No specific development plans are known for the balance of the property nor is the site being actively marketed. The site is in single ownership, belonging to the Corbett family of Wilmington.

(8) Ease of Site Preparation and Construction

Development of a boat launch and park amenity at this site would be expensive. The site's variable topography would require extensive grading to create a useable area for the ramp and parking area. A steep bluff along the east side of the property would limit the location of any access road into the site. Substantial clearing of existing vegetation would be necessary. Shallow water and wetlands along the site's riverine shore would require extensive dredging initially and on a continuing basis to maintain sufficient water depth for the facility. Treated water is available to the site, but any sewage disposal needs would require that a lift station be installed.

(9) Suitability For Fireboat Location

This site would not be as well suited for use as a fire boat berth as several of the other locations. The presence of wetlands and shallow water here would necessitate dredging, bulkheading and maintenance to provide satisfactory water depth. Any berth at this site would be from 17 to 19 blocks from Headquarters Station, depending upon the exact location chosen within the site. Response times and daily access would therefore be hampered relative to other sites.

(10) Alternative Uses of the Property

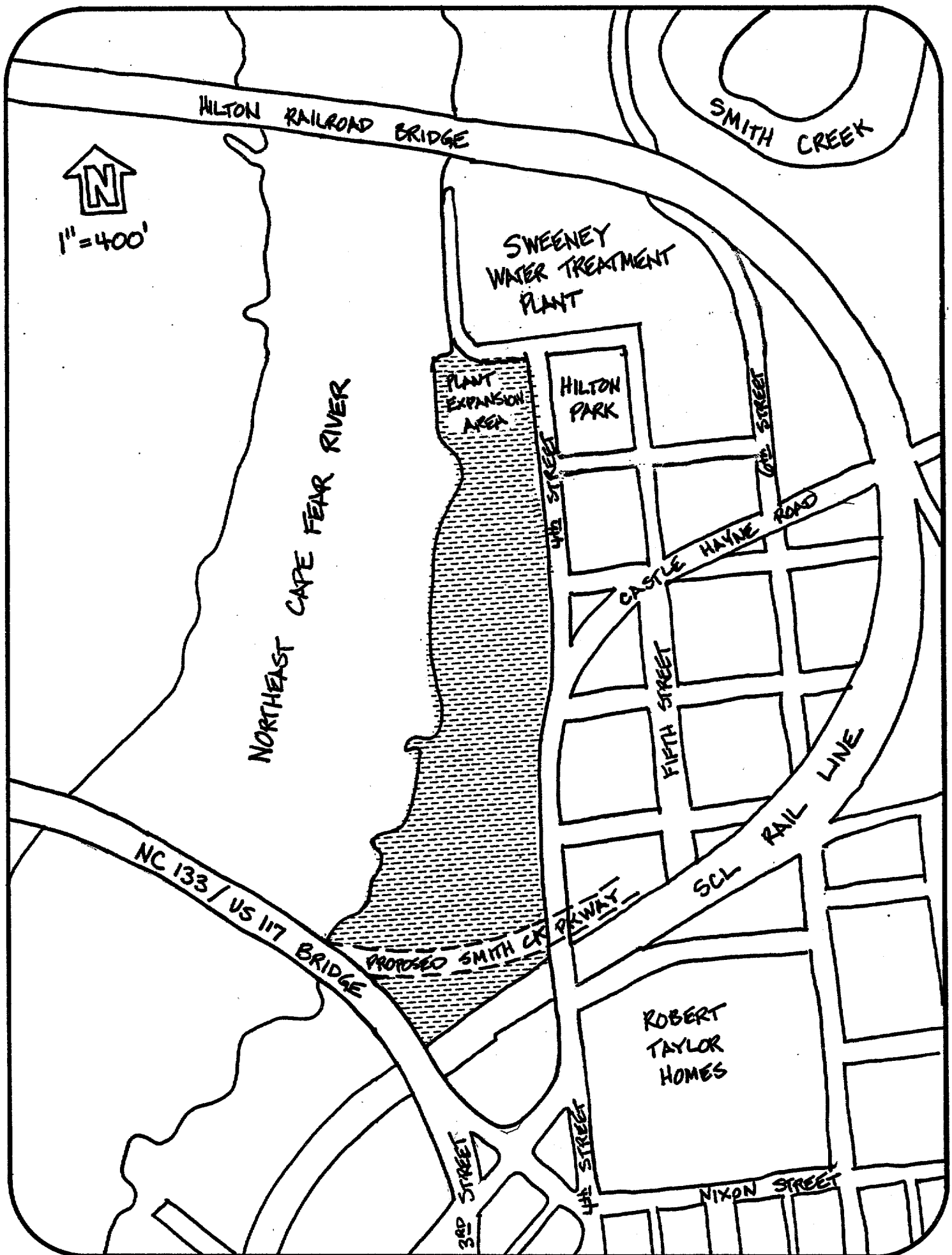
Prior uses and existing conditions indicate the possibility of this property being developed for industrial purposes. Records show that this site was formally in industrial use and was served by a rail spur of the old Atlantic Coastline Railroad Company. Remnant pilings in the river offshore are evidence of the former Bates Lumber Company Warehouse. Prior to its burning, the warehouse was last used for furniture storage. The majority of property is currently zoned M-2, the City's least restrictive manufacturing district. While the river channel decreases substantially in depth above the new highway bridge, a 25 foot channel is nonetheless maintained and available to the site. The presence of U.S. 117 and the possibility of the Smith Creek Parkway coming together at the south end of the site add some credence to the industrial development potential of the property. To date, specific industrial proposals for the site have not been publicly discussed.

4.2.2 Seaboard Coastline Railroad Site

(1) Site Size and Expansion Potential

Consisting of only 3/4 of an acre, the small size of this site is probably its most limiting factor. As shown in Figure 4.2.2, the area under consideration is only a small portion of the total tract owned by the railroad; the remainder of the property is better suited for commercial or light industrial uses. Thus, while the 3/4 acre portion of the tract could accommodate a boat launch and parking area, there would be little room available for other amenities. Future expansion of the facility would also be constrained by the unavailability of additional land.

FIGURE 4.2.1 HILTON PARK SITE



(2) Land Use Compatibility

This site is located in the midst of a largely developed area. A storage tank and fuel transfer facility occupy the land immediately to the north. Wholesale and storage activities are located in two old railroad warehouses to the east. Cape Fear Technical Institute maintains a floating barge for classrooms on the water area to the south. None of these uses are considered incompatible with a boat launch at the present time. Should the southernmost warehouse ever be converted to a commercial or mixed use development, however, the car, boat and trailer traffic generated by the launch could be a problem. It is also reasonable to assume that the continued growth of Cape Fear Technical Institute will place further demands on the supply of available land in this area.

(3) Access From the Street System

Traffic to the facility would logically flow from Third or Front Street to Red Cross Street to Nutt Street. Access to the facility from the north would be acceptable from either Third or Front, as both streets travel through sparsely developed commercial and light industrial areas. Approaching the facility from the south would require cars with trailers to pass through the urban core, probably via Third Street. In any case, problems of traffic congestion would be most likely to occur along Red Cross Street in competition with traffic generated by Cape Fear Technical Institute.

Access into the site is provided by an existing single lane road along the south side of the southernmost warehouse. This access road would require widening and possibly other improvements to make it acceptable for traffic associated with the boat launch.

(4) Suitability of Location For Pleasure Craft Use

This site is centrally located between the two bridges and lies roughly opposite the confluence of the Cape Fear and Northeast Cape Fear Rivers. The mouth of the Brunswick River is about four miles to the south. As such, the site provides good access to hunting and fishing grounds north of the City and acceptable access to points south of Wilmington. In addition, the Battleship Memorial and downtown center are less than 1/2 mile to the south, making the site well-suited for pleasure boating and sailing activities. As with the Hilton site, the usefulness of this location during the raft race would be limited unless the direction of the race were changed to coincide with the incoming tide. Even then, traffic congestion would be likely in and around this small site.

(5) Suitability For Use as a Park

As stated under (1) above, there would be limited space available at this location for park amenities after the boat launch and parking area were constructed. The industrial and shipping uses to the north could also have a negative impact on park use. While the storage tank and northern warehouse provide some buffering in this regard, these structures do not contribute positively to the creation of a

park environment. Cape Fear Technical Institute has also made periodic park-like improvements on its grounds in recent years, perhaps lessening the need for another park in the immediate area.

(6) Contribution to Riverfront Redevelopment

This site lies near the northern edge of the City's area of concentration for redevelopment. The redevelopment area is generally defined as ending in the vicinity of Red Cross Street. Development of a public facility such as a boat launch at this site could clearly define the northernmost extent of the prime redevelopment area. It could also create a point of interest for the upstream end of the proposed riverfront walkway. Conceivably, boaters temporarily docked at the facility could make convenient trips to food and goods stores housed in the nearby Cotton Exchange (2 blocks walking distance). The demand for such trips is unknown at this time, however.

(7) Site Availability and Acquisition

Most prior plans by The Family Lines Rail System (FLRS) for use of its property in this vicinity have largely ignored this relatively small, three-quarter acre site. The site is effectively severed from the remainder of the FLRS holdings in the area by the presence of the storage tank and warehouses to the north and east respectively. Thus, the property under consideration has laid dormant over the past several years. An exception was the installation of the City's main northside sewage outfall on the property in 1981.

Generally, it is the policy of the railroad company to encourage real estate transactions and developments of its land holdings which will generate further demand for rail service. The construction of a boat launch would obviously not be consistent with this policy. Nonetheless, the small size and relative isolation of this site might render the site more expendable than other riverfront properties owned by the railroad.

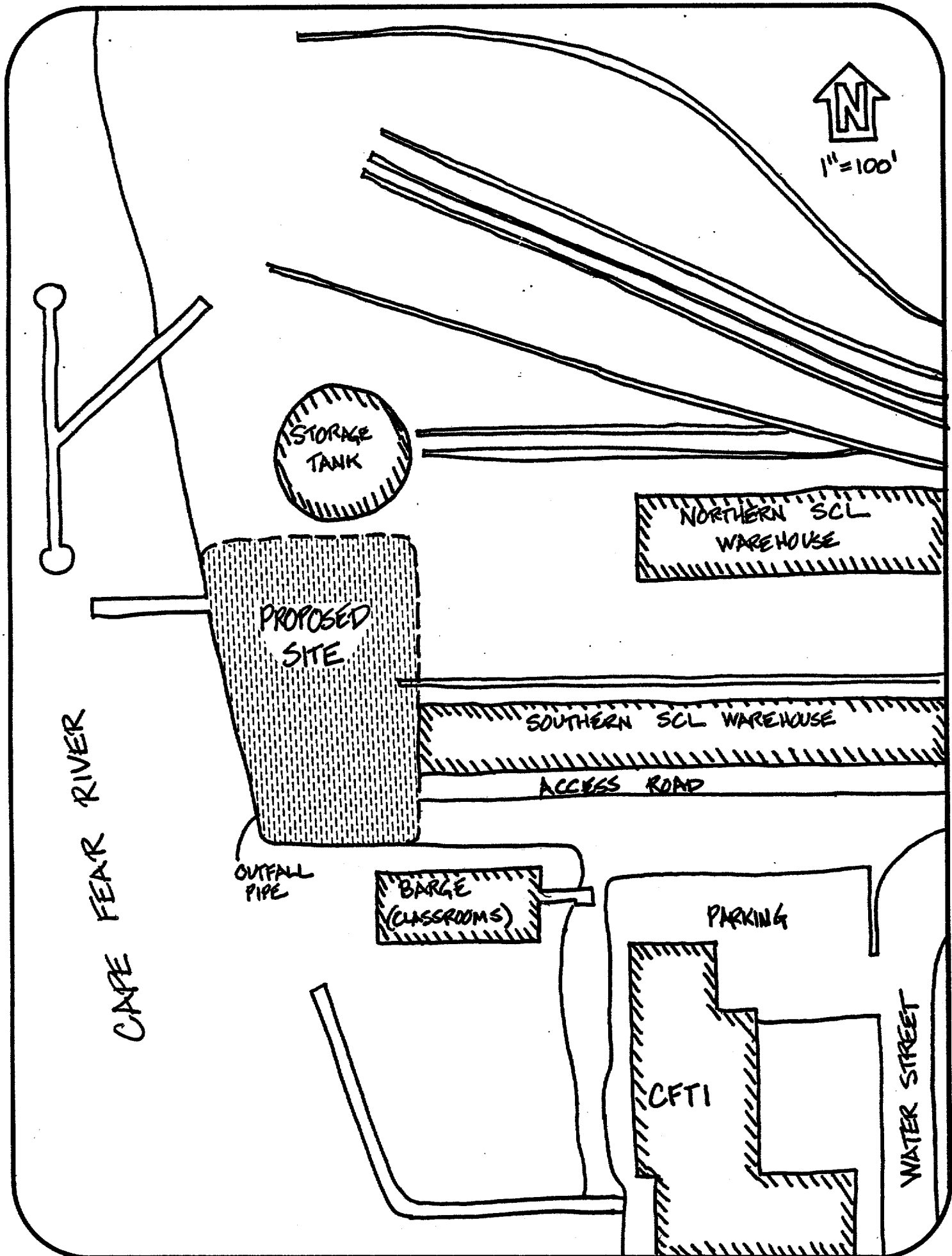
(8) Ease of Site Preparation and Construction

Preparing this site for use by boaters would be relatively easy in some aspects and more difficult in others. Access to the site, for example, is convenient along the south side of the southernmost warehouse. The site is generally level and clear of large trees. There is good water depth immediately offshore minimizing the need for dredging. Construction of the ramp, however, would be made difficult by the large difference in elevation between the site and the water level. Substantial cutting and grading deep into the site would be necessary to achieve an acceptable slope for the ramp. This could cause problems with existing utilities and, perhaps, the foundation of the nearest warehouse.

(9) Suitability For Fire Boat Location

The navigation channel comes close to the shore in this stretch of the river affording good depth near the site. The small size of the property, however, limits the availability of space for a fire-boat berth. Available site frontage along the river is less than

FIGURE 4.2.2. SCL RR SITE



200 feet, making the likelihood of a well-spaced boat ramp, courtesy docking, and a fireboat berth improbable. Also contributing to the problem is the presence of the City's main outfall pipe from the Northside Sewage Treatment Plant. While the effluent is usually clean and odor-free upon reaching the river, the mere location of the outfall on the site creates another potential physical obstacle to full use of the property.

In terms of response time, the site is located approximately ten blocks from Fire Headquarters, making it reasonably accessible.

(10) Alternative Uses of the Property

As stated under (1) above, this three-quarter acre tract is only a small portion of a larger piece of property owned by the Family Lines Rail System. Due to the location of the property in a transitional area between the central business district and shipping-related uses, a wide-ranging cross section of development proposals have been put forth for the property over the past several years.

In 1978, for example, a riverfront concept plan prepared for the City by a private consultant envisioned a mixed use development on this property. The proposal suggested high-rise residential uses along the river, restoration and commercial retail use of the existing warehouses, outdoor open space and recreation areas, and ample parking. The plan for this property was never carried beyond the conceptual stage.

In 1981, a controversial proposal was made to construct a coal transfer facility on a portion of the larger property located north of the storage tank and warehouses. Falling demand for coal in Europe delayed implementation of the project. In the meantime, a special zoning referendum held in 1982 effectively barred coal transfer facilities from this site and any other properties in the M-1 zoning district. During the height of the coal facility controversy, the non-industrial, mixed use concept reemerged as an alternative use of the site. The property was also among those sites evaluated in the January, 1982 convention center location and feasibility study prepared for the City. The consultants ranked the site lowest among the five considered in the study. Most recently, the 1982 riverfront redevelopment plan for Wilmington calls for use of the property consistent with a commercial and light industrial designation.

4.2.3 Nun To Church Street Site

(1) Site Size and Expansion Potential

This narrow, undeveloped strip of land consists of 1-3/4 acres, falling within the one to two acre standard used by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. The present makeshift launch site at the foot of Nun Street has been in continuous use since the late 1950's when the site was first cleared and a ramp installed. Parking for the existing facility is accommodated within the fully paved right-of-way of Nun Street. Continued use of the facility, however, would

likely require an expansion of available parking onto the property south of Nun Street. The narrow, sloping character of the property could make the creation of an adequately sized, level parking area difficult to achieve without destroying the natural beauty of the site. This site is also considered a critical area for a section of the proposed riverfront walkway, making provision of space for that feature important. Future expansions beyond the 1-3/4 acre area are not possible in light of the existing development which surrounds the site.

(2) Land Use Compatibility

Land use issues for this site revolve around its location in the Wilmington Historic District. The property is located between Chandler's Wharf on the north, and the Cameron-Hollman House property on the south. The Governor Dudley Mansion and the Cassidy House sit on elevated tracts immediately to the east, separated by a stone retaining wall. The wall averages 15 feet in height, affording a stronger physical separation that would be available on level ground.

While the present light use of the existing Nun Street facility has generated only infrequent complaints from surrounding land owners, there would likely be more serious objections from Historic District residents if the facility were improved or expanded for greater use. While this statement has not been validated by formal survey, a review of related letter files and general knowledge of resident attitudes is considered reliable.

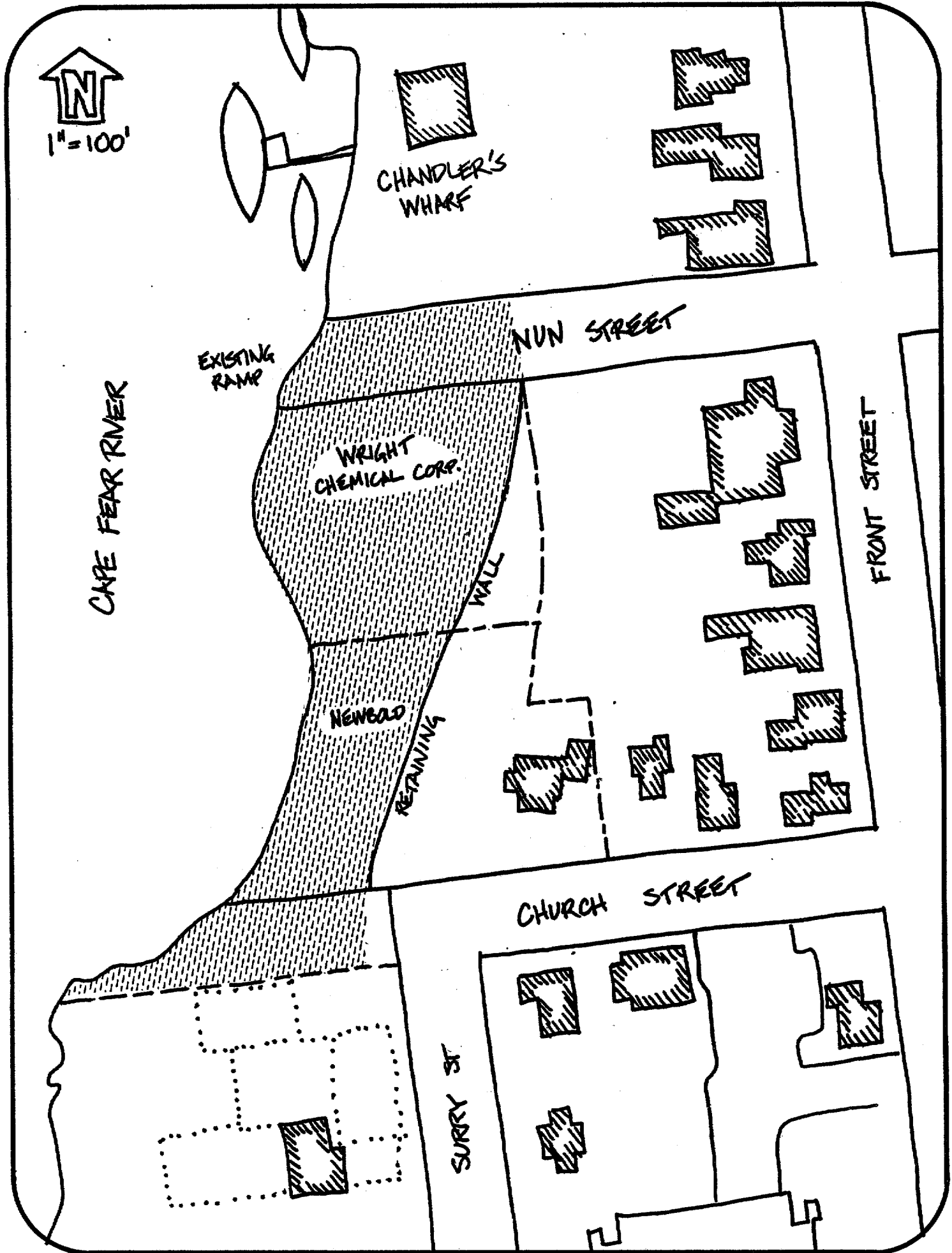
(3) Access From Street System

Access to this site is from Third or Front Street to Nun Street. While the right-of-way for Church Street fronts on the south end of the site, the street is not open or improved and the slope is excessive. The fact that traffic would have to pass through the heart of the Historic District to reach the facility is a principle drawback of this site. Existing land uses along Front, Church, and Nun Streets are predominantly single family and multi-family residential development. The Governor Dudley Mansion, headquarters of the Historic Wilmington Foundation, sits immediately to the east of the property. Considerable effort has gone into the preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of structures in this area. There is legitimate concern that the presence of a fully developed boat launching facility could generate traffic and activities that would be detrimental to the individual and community value of these structures.

(4) Suitability of Location For Pleasure Craft Use

The twenty-year-plus history of continuous use of the Nun Street location by area boaters is a proven track record of the need for such a facility in the general area. Such use has persisted despite hazardous ramp conditions, frequent automobile break-ins, and lack of services such as fuel, water and restrooms. The fact that this particular site has seen such use may be more a function, however, of its monopolistic position in this section of the river - rather than its other assets.

FIGURE 4.2.3 NUN TO CHURCH ST. SITE



These arguments aside, the site is well-centered with regard to most boating needs, providing balanced access to points north and south of the City. The confluence of the Cape Fear and Northeast Cape Fear Rivers is less than one mile to the north and the mouth of the Brunswick River is roughly three and one-half miles to the south.

The downtown center and Battleship Memorial are less than one-half mile away. The Nun Street site has been used for the past three years for the launching of sailboats for regattas held on the river in conjunction with Riverfest. 1982 marked the first year that this site was not designated as the pull-out point for raft race participants. The congestion, bad ramp conditions, and steep slope of Nun Street apparently outweighed the convenience of the location. While ramp conditions would be improved if this site were fully developed, it is doubtful that the problems of congestion and excessive slope could be easily remedied.

(5) Suitability For Use as a Park

The site has several features which make it especially well-suited for use as a park. The property has moderate to gently sloping terrain and has numerous attractive mature trees. Views from the site are pleasant and dramatic at the same time, including the Cameron-Hollman House and grounds, the Memorial Lift Bridge, undeveloped property directly across the river, the Battleship Memorial, and Chandler's Wharf. The site is located within convenient walking distance of the entire Historic District area, yet is somewhat buffered from the closest residences by a stone retaining wall. While the 15 foot high retaining wall would be insufficient to block the noise and activity generated by a boat launch, it would be adequate to buffer any passive activities associated with a small urban park. In fact, this relatively small site is sufficiently well-suited for park use to recommend that development of a full-scale boat launch and parking area on this site be avoided, leaving the maximum area available for possible future park development.

(6) Contribution To Riverfront Redevelopment

Development of the Nun to Church Street site for public use would be highly compatible with the City's redevelopment efforts along the riverfront. Presently, the extent of public and private improvements along the water occurs in a generally spotty fashion, highlighted by (from north to south) the Cotton Exchange, the Hilton, the Waterfront Plaza Park and foot of Market Street area, Stemmerman's Restaurant, Chandler's Wharf, and the Cameron-Hollman House at the foot of Church Street. Development of this site for public use would fill one important gap in the redevelopment effort. This would be especially true if the site were developed for park purposes, with a section of the riverfront walkway traversing the property. While a locked gate presently blocks passage of pedestrians through Chandler's Wharf to the north, the owner of the Wharf has stated that he would have no objections to allowing free passage through the area as part of a riverfront walkway.

(7) Site Availability and Acquisition

The Nun Street to Church Street site is comprised of two tracts of separately owned properties which are similar in size. In both cases, the existing north-south running retaining wall defines the percentage of each tract available for use.

The northern tract, owned by the Thomas Wright family, consists of one acre. One-fourth of that area is above the retaining wall, however, leaving roughly three-fourths of an acre available at the water's edge. Mrs. Jesse Newbold is listed in the tax records as the owner of the tract closest to Church Street. While the full tract contains roughly one and a quarter acres, only about one-half acre occurs below the retaining wall.

Neither site is known to be on the market for sale or lease.

(8) Ease of Site Preparation and Construction

The Nun to Church Street site would require the least amount of site preparation of any of the properties being considered. The near shore water is sufficiently deep and fairly well protected. The existing boat ramp could be incorporated into any new design. A nominal amount of clearing and grading would be required. The existing foundation of an old wharf could possibly serve as at least a partial substructure for a fireboat dock. There is an insignificant amount of marsh grass at the site, minimizing the probability of any environmental problems. Partial demolition of a comparatively small retaining wall along Nun Street might be required. Any of these site improvements would require review and approval by the Historic District Commission, due to the site's location in the historic area.

(9) Suitability For Fireboat Berth

Several factors make this site desirable as a location for the City's fireboat. The near shore water is sufficiently deep so as to minimize the need for initial and continuing dredging. The length of frontage along the river provides adequate space for a fireboat dock in addition to the ramp and other site amenities. As stated in (8) above, the existing foundation of an old wharf might be used in conjunction with the fireboat dock. The site is within close proximity of much of the City's riverfront development, making delivery of fire protection services efficient. Finally, the site is only seven blocks from Fire Headquarters, making it easily accessible to fireboat crews for maintenance and emergency response.

(10) Alternative Uses of the Property

The 1945 consultant's report Economy of Wilmington Area identifies this property as being in use at the time by a wharf at the Broadfoot Iron Works. The wharf was eventually abandoned and left to decay.

In the late 1950's City crews cleared away much of the remains of the Iron Works wharf, leaving only some bulkheading along the river's edge and remnant pilings in the nearshore water. Under informal agreement with the property owner, the property was established as an unofficial park along the waterfront. Since then, the property has changed hands and the informal agreement apparently abandoned, as evidenced by the no trespassing signs posted on the property.

Future industrial use of the site is highly unlikely. Alternative uses generally known to have been discussed for the site in recent years have included an extension of Chandler's Wharf or a townhouse development. Park use of the property has been a continuing option, of course, since the site was first cleared over 20 years ago.

4.2.4 Foot of Castle Street - North Side of Street

(1) Site Size and Expansion Potential

This site consists of roughly two and one-half acres including about two-thirds of an acre within the Castle Street right-of-way adjacent to the property. The privately held land is owned by Carolina Power and Light Company, which operates an electrical substation on the site. Despite rumors to the contrary, discussions with CP&L officials indicate no plans to phase out the substation in the near future. If continued dredging of the river channel should eventually cause damage to the submarine cables feeding the station, a reevaluation of this position would be likely, however. So long as the substation occupies a significant portion of the property, use of the site for a boat launch would be untenable. Without the substation, there would be ample room for the boat launching facility and other amenities.

(2) Land Use Compatibility

The development of a boat launch at this site would pose a land use conflict with the residential use of the Cameron-Hollman House, located immediately adjacent to the property. Traffic and other activities would generate undesirable noise levels in close proximity to the residence. Otherwise, the property is acceptable with regard to land use. Solomon Towers is situated a good distance from the site on the rise to the east across Surry Street. Mixed wholesale, retail, and distributive land uses occupy the block southeast of the property. A large vacant tract and the Memorial Lift Bridge are to the south across Castle Street. Finally, the river provides roughly 240 feet of frontage to the west.

(3) Access From the Street System

This site is well located for direct access from several major thoroughfares. Front and Third Streets intersect with Castle Street only two blocks from the Dawson/Wooster, US 17/74/76 travel

corridor. This corridor, along with Third Street to the north and Carolina Beach Road to the south, provides excellent access from all compass points in New Hanover County. Brunswick County is also well served by the proximity of this site to the bridge and thus points west. Identification of the foot of Castle Street area with the bridge would aid the prospective user in finding the launch.

(4) Suitability of Location For Pleasure Craft Use

The proximity of this site to the existing Nun Street facility renders conditions regarding pleasure craft use at this location very similar. The area is centrally located between hunting and fishing grounds north and south of the City. The downtown center and Battleship Memorial are about one-half mile to the north. The location could be a good pull-out point for the conclusion of the Riverfest raft race as the Lift Bridge is the last point on the City's shore before the river bank becomes primarily industrial.

Similarly, the site is well suited for launching sail craft, due to the potentially large area available, the uncongested conditions in and around the site, and the unobstructed clear sailing north to the downtown center. It has been noted that the bridge caissons in the water offshore may serve to break up the river current near the site, creating more sheltered water at the shore.

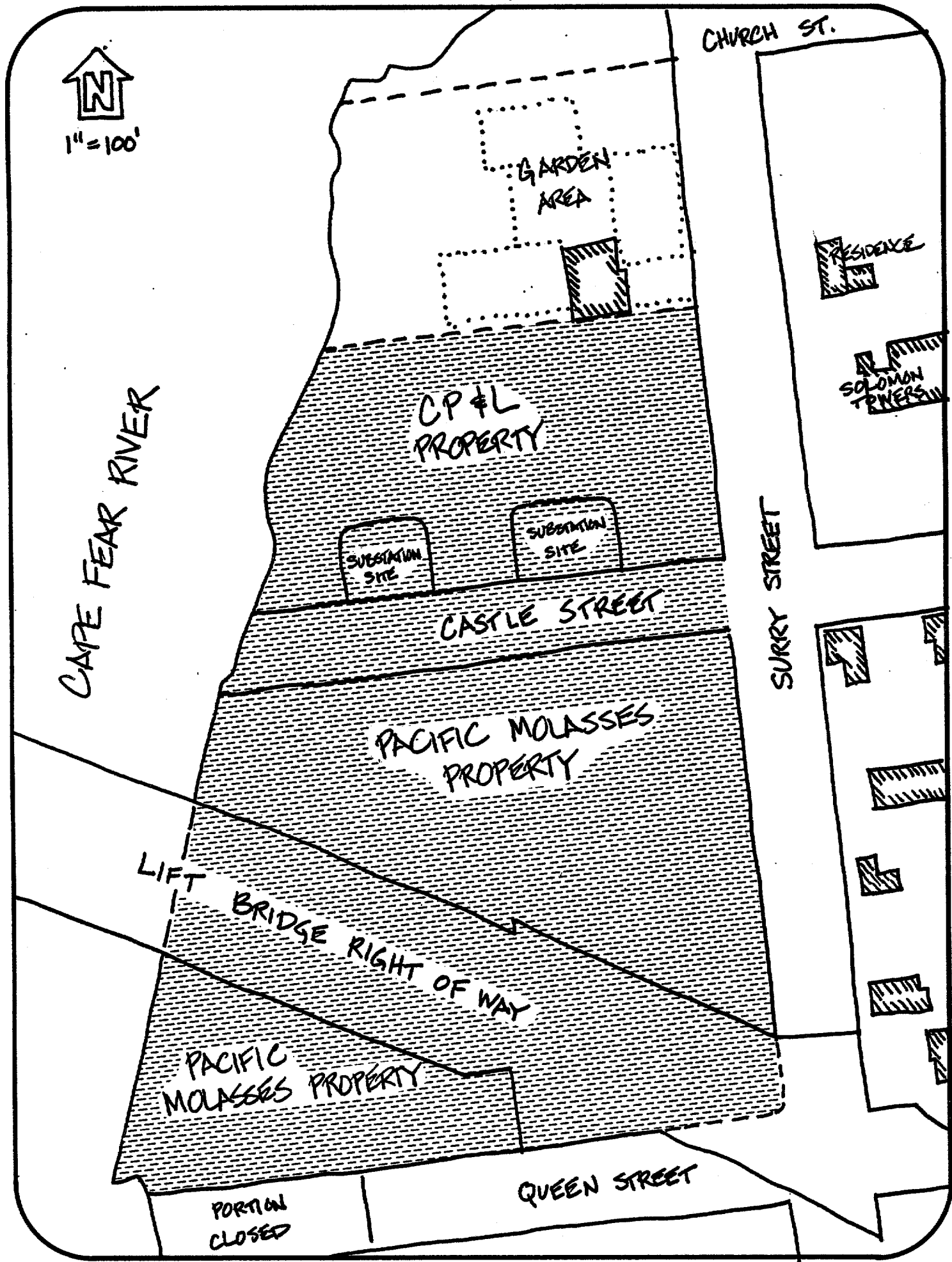
(5) Suitability For Use as a Park

The location of this site within a reasonable distance of Solomon Towers and the Historic District contributes to its value as a potential park site. While the property is not actually within the Historic District, it is nonetheless within a convenient two to ten block walking distance of several hundred dwellings. Creation of a new park at this site would complement the recently completed Waterfront Plaza Park, some six blocks to the north. Since there are no existing trees of significant size on the property, plantings would be necessary to create a suitable park environment. The only drawback of the location for park use is the fairly constant noise level generated by traffic crossing the lift bridge.

(6) Contribution to Riverfront Redevelopment

Development of this site for a boat launch and urban park would contribute appreciably to redevelopment efforts along the waterfront. Currently, a clearly defined southern locale for the termination of riverfront redevelopment activities is lacking. The Cameron-Hollman House stands alone in this function. If the boat launch were to be constructed at this site, it would help extend redevelopment closer to the lift bridge, the logical demarcation between downtown development to the north and industrial uses to the south. The facility would also create a southern terminus for the proposed riverfront walkway. A finite destination such as a park and boat launch would add to the utility of the walkway.

FIGURE 4.2.4 CASTLE STREET SITES



Nearby elderly residents of Solomon Towers would also be provided with a point of interest on the river. In addition to viewing or aiding launching activities at the ramp, the residents might enjoy examining the catches brought in by sportsmen using the facility.

(7) Site Availability and Acquisition

As stated in (1) above, much of this property is currently occupied by an electrical substation owned and operated by the CP&L Company. So long as the substation continues on the site, development of the property for public use is unlikely. In the event that the substation is no longer needed or is retired for other reasons, removal of the unit's components would aid the appearance of the area. (This is despite commendable efforts by CP&L officials to buffer the appearance of the facility with planted vegetation.) At that point in time, it would be advantageous for the City or a private developer to acquire the property for appropriate redevelopment use (for a boat launch or otherwise).

(8) Ease of Site Preparation and Construction

The likelihood that the electrical substation will continue to occupy this site for the foreseeable future creates a cloud on its potential use for boat launching purposes. Other than that major obstacle, the site is in good condition for development; the portion of the site not actually occupied by the substation has been cleared, graded, grassed over, and is generally well-maintained. Castle Street provides good access along the south side of the property, while Surry Street abuts the site to the east.

With the exception of the Castle Street right-of-way, the site's shoreline has been bulkheaded. The unengineered shoreline at the foot of Castle Street would be the most logical location for construction of the ramp. The street would have to be regraded to get it down below the water's surface. Dredging would be required to accommodate the ramp area and a berth for the fireboat.

Development of this site would be contingent upon the eventual removal of the substation; potential dredging conflicts with submarine cables serving the station would then be resolved. Even so, an existing private water line serving the western shore operations of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would require attention in any dredging operations.

(9) Suitability For Fireboat Berth

This site would be suited for the permanent location of the City's fireboat. The site is centrally located between the State Ports on the south and the downtown center to the north. The existing bulkheading along the shore of the property would provide a possible infrastructure upon which to build additional piers, catwalks or docks. Castle Street is roughly nine blocks from Fire Headquarters,

making routine maintenance as well as emergency response time favorable. Dredging and/or the placement of the dock for the boat in deeper water would be necessary to achieve a minimum five foot clearance at low tide. As is the case with pleasure boats, the bridge caissons in the water offshore could serve to create calmer waters immediately adjacent to this site.

(10) Alternative Uses of the Property

Years ago this property was the site of an electrical generating plant and a gas plant, with the property south of Castle Street serving as a coal dumping facility for the units. These facilities have been long since cleared away. As noted previously, there has been discussion recently of the possible phasing out of the electrical substation which currently occupies the site. It had been rumored that the construction of the new substation at 9th and Orange would eliminate the need for the Castle Street station. CP&L Company officials, however, have stated that there are no plans to retire the substation in the foreseeable future (i.e., ten years).

Alternative uses of the property are difficult to identify, owing to the transitional nature of the Castle Street area between the Historic District and industrial areas to the south. While views from the property are good and its position close to downtown is strategic, noise levels from the lift bridge make residential use of the property less desirable. Some type of marine office or appropriate commercial use of the property might be the next best alternative.

4.2.5 Foot of Castle Street - South Side of Street

(1) Site Size and Expansion Potential

Consisting of about four acres, this property includes about two-thirds of an acre within the Castle Street right-of-way and one and a third acres of North Carolina Department of Transportation right-of-way under the Memorial Lift Bridge. There appears to be ample room available for a boat launch and urban park amenity. With 240 feet of frontage on the river, the site would also be able to accommodate a berth or dock for the City fireboat. Preliminary discussions with officials of the N.C.D.O.T. have indicated that use of the right-of-way area under the bridge would be feasible, so long as a liability agreement is arranged. The easement area could be used as necessary to accommodate parking for cars and trailers.

(2) Land Use Compatibility

Owing largely to its increased distance from the Cameron-Hollman House, this site is well suited for boat launch development. In contrast to the site just north of Castle Street, this property does not directly abut the restored residence; the CP&L property containing the electrical substation intervenes. The president of Industrial Sales Company, owner of the Cameron-Hollman House, has endorsed the concept of a public boat launch and park on this site.

Solomon Towers is within convenient viewing distance of the site, but is sufficiently removed so as not to be disturbed by activities associated with a boat launch. A block of mixed commercial and wholesale uses lies to the east of the property. The Memorial Lift Bridge and the operations of the Pacific Molasses Company are located south of the site. Land uses across the river to the west include largely vacant property and another electrical substation.

The lift bridge clearly dominates the character of the site by its size and presence and also by the nearly constant noise generated by traffic passing over the structure. In this respect, noise caused by cars, boats, and trailers at the boat launch facility would be expected to contribute only marginally to noise levels in the vicinity.

(3) Access From the Street System

Characteristics are the same as for the site north of Castle Street. See Section 5.2.3(3).

(4) Suitability of Location For Pleasure Craft Use

Characteristics are the same as for the site north of Castle Street. See Section 5.2.3(4).

(5) Suitability For Use as a Park

Characteristics are the same as for the site north of Castle Street. See Section 5.2.3(5).

(6) Contribution to Riverfront Redevelopment

If the boat launch were to be developed at this site, its contribution to the riverfront redevelopment would be similar to that of the Castle Street - North site. A southern anchor for non-industrial redevelopment would be created, an end point for the riverfront walkway would be established, and an activity node would be made available for the residents of the Historic District in general, and Solomon Towers in particular.

Beyond these similarities, however, this site's location is strategically superior to the property north of Castle Street. The 1982 redevelopment plan for Wilmington's riverfront identifies the Memorial Lift Bridge as the most logical point of separation between the non-industrial redevelopment activities of the urban center, and the industrial/shipping related uses to the south. Creation of a public boat launch and urban park at the lift bridge site would answer this need, effectively resolving the issue. Pursuit of full riverfront redevelopment north of the bridge to the downtown core could then occur with greater certainty. Completion of the riverfront walkway could tie the various activities together, with the boat launch and bridge forming a stronghold at the southern end.

(7) Site Availability and Acquisition

The Pacific Molasses Company (Sucrest) is listed in the tax records as owners of the property south of Castle Street. The North Carolina Department of Transportation holds a 150 foot strip of land under the Memorial Lift Bridge running generally northwest to southeast across the property. Castle Street and Surry Street are fully open and are in public ownership. The first 390[±] feet of Queen Street west of Surry Street is owned by the City; the remaining 245[±] feet down to the river's edge has been closed and is held by Pacific Molasses.

During development of the 1982 riverfront plan, the terminal manager of Pacific Molasses Company expressed opposition to the plan as proposed, i.e., the designation of the lift bridge as the northernmost extent of industrial activities south of the urban center. While there are apparently no immediate plans to expand the Company's operations north of the lift bridge, the management would nonetheless prefer to keep its options open for the property. Acquisition of the property might therefore be necessary over the objections of the owner.

(8) Ease of Site Preparation and Construction

This site is in good condition for possible development as a boat launch facility. Despite the presence of kudzu vine over the majority of the tract, the site is generally clear of obstructions and is reasonably level. Castle Street provides good access along the north side of the property, while Surry Street abuts the site to the east. A portion of Queen Street is also open along the south side of the site.

One problem might be the presence of remnant foundations from an old rail siding and former bottom-dump coal unloading facility. It is expected, however, that the foundations could be removed through normal bulldozing or similar clearance operations. While the soils on the property may be infiltrated with coal, procedures to deal with this problem will depend upon the amount of coal present.

As with the site north of Castle Street, the shoreline of the property is bulkheaded, leaving the Castle Street right-of-way as the most likely spot for construction of a boat ramp. Dredging would also be necessary in the nearshore waters for the ramp and a fireboat berth.

(9) Suitability For Fire Boat Berth

Characteristics are the same as for the site north of Castle Street. See Section 5.2.3(9).

(10) Alternative Uses of the Property

As discussed under (7) above, the terminal manager of Pacific Molasses has expressed his company's desire that this property remain in its possession for possible future expansion of plant, tank farm, or

office uses. Current zoning of the tract is for M-2, the least restrictive manufacturing/industrial district in the City. Expansion of the Pacific Molasses Company operations would be allowed under present zoning.

While the proposed new zoning ordinance is still under review at this time, indications are that the new law, if adopted, would prohibit tank farms and other similar uses from this property. The intent is to protect the integrity of the Historic District and associated property values in the area, as well as providing a transitional use between the Historic District and industrial uses to the south.

While industrial use of this property may be viable from a purely economic perspective, the resulting damage to aesthetic and community values in the area would be large. In the absence of a boat launch, other preferred uses might include a marine-oriented office or some type of appropriate commercial use.

4.2.6 N.C. State Ports Authority Northern Tract

(1) Site Size and Expansion Potential

This is by far the largest of the sites evaluated, consisting of some 40 to 45 acres of undeveloped land. Much of the eastern half of the property is low lying wooded swamp, however, and is subject to the protective environmental laws of the State and Federal government. A strip of marsh along the site's river shore is also covered by wetland laws. The northernmost corner of the property is currently leased to the Southern Wood Piedmont Company which operates a creosote log treatment operation on the property immediately to the north. The remaining estimated 20 to 25 acres of land is characterized by secondary growth of hardwoods on spoil deposits that were emplaced many years ago. Absent some alternative use, there is plenty of space available on-site for the boat launch, a park, a fireboat berth, and for future expansions.

(2) Land Use Compatibility

Due to the large size of the tract and its location away from any residential or retail commercial establishments, a boat launch at this site would be expected to have few land use compatibility problems. As noted above, Southern Wood Piedmont operates a log treatment business immediately north of the site. To the east beyond the wooded swamp and a rail line are three ballfields in Optimist Park. The southern boundary line of the site is formed by the outfall canal for Greenfield Lake. South of the canal are storage tanks and facilities of the Chevron Company. The land area across the river to the west is undeveloped. Despite the site's location between industrial uses, noise levels on the property are extremely low. The heavily wooded nature of the site tends to muffle sounds in the area. The noise generated by activities at the boat launch would have no negative effect on area land uses.

(3) Access From Street System

Currently, there is no direct access road from a public street to the site. Vehicular access must be gained via an unimproved road which emerges at the south central end of the Southern Wood Piedmont property. The single lane dirt road traverses the SPA property from north to southwest, ending at the City's floodgate for the outfall canal.

While there is a dedicated "paper" street extending west to the site from Front Street, it is unlikely that it would ever be opened. The right-of-way for the street passes through Optimist Park, across the railroad tracts and into a wooded marshland area of the site. Developing such a street would be both disruptive and costly. Likewise, an extension of the existing dead end road lying north of Optimist Park would also be expensive due to the rail and wetland problems. SPA officials have indicated that the prepared access way to the site would be by an extension of Woodbine Street north. The Greenfield outfall canal would have to be enclosed or bridged. This route would provide for increased security as vehicles would have to pass through the SPA gate to get onto Woodbine Street. While this is desirable from a port operations standpoint, it would not be desirable for boat launch use.

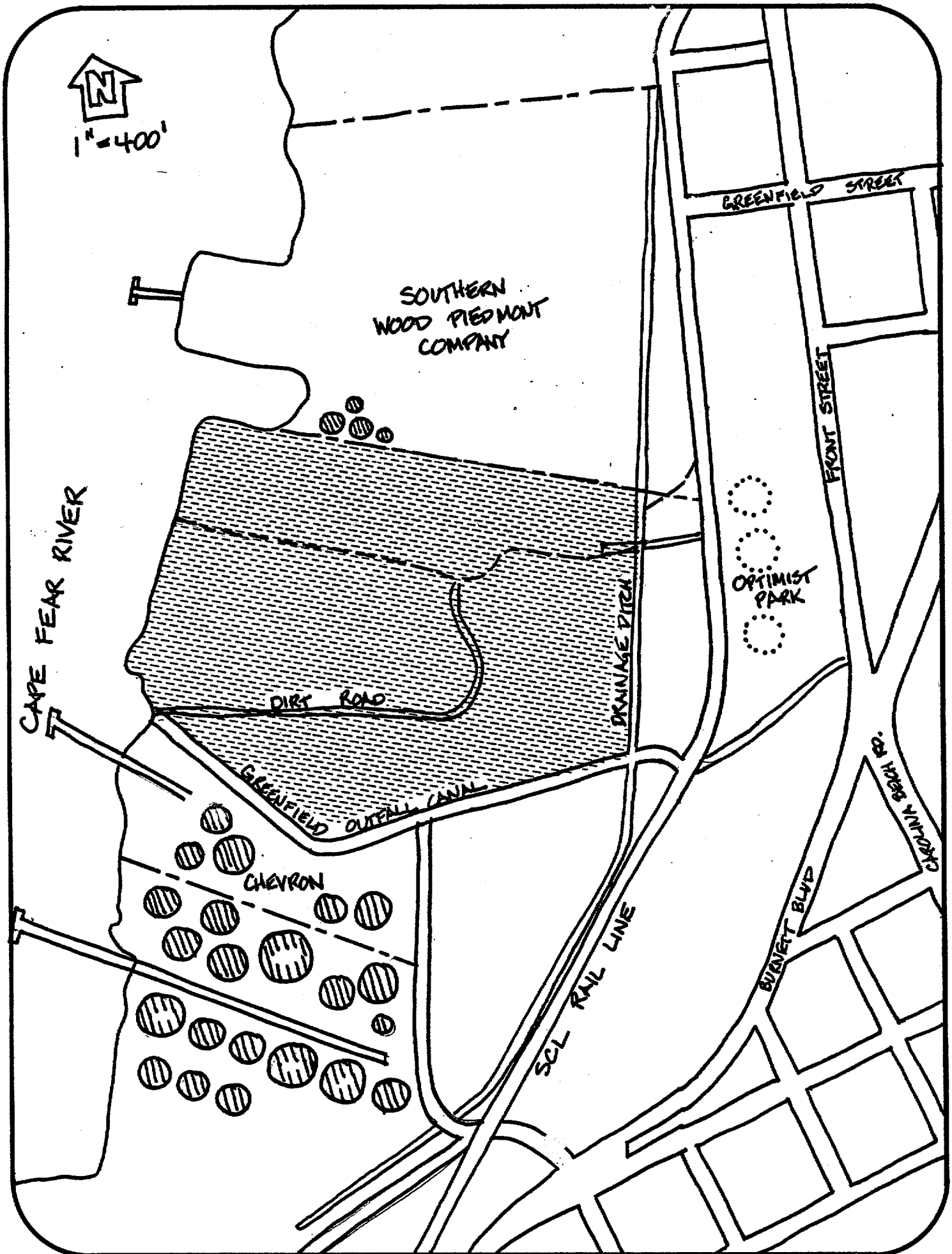
(4) Suitability of Location For Pleasure Craft Use

As the southernmost site, a boat launch at this property would provide good access to fishing and hunting areas south of the City. The Brunswick River confluence with the Cape Fear is only two miles from the site. Access of pleasure craft for other recreational purposes, however, would be more limited. The site is well south of the Memorial Lift Bridge, for example, making use of the site for sailing regattas, raft races and other purposes less advantageous. The Battleship Memorial is some 1-3/4 miles upstream. Wildlife resource areas north of the City would also be less accessible. The confluence of the Northeast Cape Fear and Cape Fear Rivers, for example, is more than 2 miles to the north while the Hilton Railroad Bridge is another mile and a half beyond that point.

(5) Suitability For Use as a Park

Despite its position between industrial uses on two sides, the site has several features that make it suited for park development. First, the 40-45 acre size of the tract is quite extensive, allowing for flexible design and buffering as desirable. Second, the property has varied topography and vegetative cover. Vegetation, for example, includes a wooded swamp area to the east, mature hardwoods on higher ground to the west, and a strip of regularly flooded marshland along the river's edge. The property is also strategically aligned on an east-west axis with Optimist Park, the City's Rose Garden, and Greenfield Lake. Collectively, these areas comprise a sizable open space corridor extending deep into the urbanized area from the river.

FIGURE 4.2.6 N.C.S.P.A.: NORTHERN TRACT



Because the site is an old dredge spoil deposit area, the load-bearing ability of the soil is limited for "heavy" land uses, except on pilings. This makes industrial use of the property more costly. The only drawback of the property for park development is the apparent lack of a suitable, low cost access road into the site.

(6) Contribution To Riverfront Redevelopment

This site is remote from the City's prime riverfront redevelopment area. Any boat launch and/or park improvements made at the site would not be nearly as visible or accessible as improvements made at any of the other sites. Consistent with the points made under (5) above, however, preservation of the site in a park-type use could contribute significantly to a major east-west open space corridor.

(7) Site Availability and Acquisition

The entire tract is owned by the North Carolina State Ports Authority. As discussed in (10) below, the SPA has been marketing the site for prospective shipping related tenants.

An evaluation of site availability requires discussion of the City-County Land Use Plan and Policies For Growth and Development. The property is classified as "Conservation" in the Land Use Plan and would require a reclassification for industrial development to proceed. In a previous application for reclassification to a less restrictive category, the request was denied on grounds of environmental and urban open space objectives.

Reclassification of the property would not be consistent with the Land Use Plan and Policies unless (1) wetland and important environmental features were largely preserved, (2) provision was made for the allocation of permanent open space and (3) the anticipated use of the property was water dependent (i.e., economically dependent upon the river channel).

It is possible, therefore, that a reclassification of the site could result in the allocation of some portion of the property for permanent public open space use. The open space could conceivably be used for a boat launch facility if the acreage allocated was of an appropriate size and location.

The probability of all of these factors working favorably for the allocation of space for a boat launch is not known; the intent here is to simply note the possibility.

(8) Ease of Site Preparation and Construction

The undeveloped, overgrown, and relatively inaccessible nature of this site would make it costly to develop as a boat launching facility. Vehicular access to the site, for example, might require either an elevated roadway constructed on pilings through the wooded swamp area or a bridge across the Greenfield Canal from Woodbine Street. Construction of the boat ramp and fireboat berth would require considerable dredging of the wetlands and shallow areas along the river. Clearance of trees and undergrowth would also be necessary. No water or sewer service is immediately available on site.

(9) Suitability For Fireboat Berth

This site is the most distant from Fire Headquarters, being some 25 blocks or roughly 2 miles from Fourth and Dock Streets. Emergency and maintenance access to the facility would therefore be less convenient than the other sites. Response time to fires in the industrial area south of the lift bridge would be good, but clearly less effective in serving a fire in the downtown area or points north. While there is ample property frontage along the river, construction of a fireboat dock would likely be costly, requiring extensive dredging or piling to reach water of sufficient depth.

(10) Alternative Uses of the Property

For several years in the 1970's it was generally known that the State Ports Authority was looking to this site as a possible expansion area for its port operations. With the decision to expand the container operations southward to the former Texaco property however, the plans were set aside. Since that time, the SPA has been looking for a prospective tenant for the site. Discussion of possible occupants have included wood chip handlers, a coal exporting facility, and a transshipment site for new automobiles. Most recently, a shipyard or similar use has been discussed, perhaps associated with offshore oil development operations.

In any event, use of the full tract will be limited by extensive interior and river shore wetland areas. As much as 30 to 50% of the site may be unavailable for development of any kind. Heavy development on the remaining higher ground would probably require construction on pilings due to the poor load bearing qualities of the site's spoil deposits.

4.2.7 Summary Evaluation of Alternative Sites

Table 4.2.7 translates the written evaluations of the previous pages into numerical rankings. For each evaluation criterion, a point ranking from 1 to 6 was assigned to each alternative site. The number one (1) indicates that the given site favored particularly well under that criterion. Conversely, an assignment of six (6) means that the site ranked poorly. In the event that two or more sites warranted similar rankings, the same number was assigned. The lower the overall score, the higher the ranking of the site for use as a boat launch.

The table indicates that in selecting a location for the development of a boat launch/urban park/fireboat berth, the City should consider the various sites in the following order:

- (1) Foot of Castle Street - South Side
- (2) Nun to Church Street Site
- (3) Foot of Castle Street - North Side
- (4) Hilton Park Site
- (5) Seaboard Coastline Railroad Site
- (6) N.C. State Ports Authority Northern Tract

To summarize, the Castle Street site at the Memorial Lift Bridge was chosen above the other sites because it is superior in a number of respects. The 4+ acre size of the tract affords ample room for initial development as well as future expansion. The proposed facility would provide an appropriate transitional land use between the Historic District and the industrial area south of the bridge. Access from the street system is excellent as the site is only two blocks from the intersection of US 17/74/76, US 421 (Carolina Beach Road), Third Street and Front Street. Identification of the facility with the lift bridge will also aid first-time users in locating the launch. The site is well positioned for pleasure craft use, including the vessels of sportsmen, sailors, and Riverfest raft racers. Proximity of the property to the Historic District, Solomon Towers, and the downtown core makes it desirable for park use.

The contribution of the site to riverfront redevelopment would be significant, providing a needed southern anchor for downtown area waterfront improvements and a logical terminus for the riverfront walkway. The site is privately held by a single owner, and is presently undeveloped. Development of the property is aided by the generally cleared and level site conditions, existing bulkheading along much of the river shore, and the Castle, Surry, and Queen Street improvements immediately adjacent to the property. Frontage along the river is sufficient to provide a berth for the City fireboat separate from the recreational launch area. Finally, development of the property as proposed would head off any possible industrial use of the site, an alternative which could render considerable damage to historic preservation and redevelopment efforts north of the bridge.

SECTION 5: CONCEPT PLAN FOR SELECTED SITE

5.1 Design Rationale

Figure 5.0 presents a conceptual plan for the development of a boat launch, urban park, and fireboat berth at the foot of Castle Street near the lift bridge. The conceptual nature of the plan must be emphasized. Any final design would be dependent on a detailed topographic survey (including near shore marine conditions), locations of utilities, a review of the proposed circulation by the City traffic engineer, a detailed landscaping scheme, etc.

Nonetheless, some of the reasoning behind the design presented is as follows:

- 1) The double ramp is located directly at the foot of Castle Street, where no existing bulkheading would have to be removed.
- 2) The parking area will accommodate 24 cars with trailers within a reasonable walking distance of the ramp, and the lot does not consume desirable waterfront turf.
- 3) A dock for the fireboat is located on the site but at a good distance from the recreational activities associated with the boat ramp.
- 4) A small amount of parking is provided for the limited needs of fireboat crews.
- 5) The picnic area is located immediately adjacent to the water, and is partially shaded by the lift bridge to provide choice of comfort.
- 6) Space is reserved next to the ramp for a possible fueling facility as future conditions may warrant.
- 7) A wash down and tie down area is provided on one side of the exit route, a suitable distance from the ramp.
- 8) Construction of extensive new road surfaces is minimized by the design; i.e., access to the ramp, the fireboat and the picnic area is via the same entrance. Separate access routes as well as additional parking for the exclusive use of picnickers could be provided as desirable or warranted.
- 9) With regard to the fireboat berth in particular, consideration might also be given to locating the fireboat at a site separate from the boat launch. Possible locations could include the Castle Street north site (long term lease from CP&L) or similar arrangement near the foot of Nun Street.

CAPE FEAR RIVER

EBB FLOOD

FIRE-
BOAT
DOCK

BRIDGE
PIER

PARKING

FUTURE
FUELING
STATION

PICNIC
AREA

RAMP

PARKING

PARKING

CASTLE ST.

WASH DOWN & TIE DOWN AREA

EXIT
ONLY

ENTRANCE
ONLY

SURRY ST.

CAPE FEAR RIVER BRIDGE RIGHT OF WAY

NOT TO SCALE



FOOT OF CASTLE STREET - SOUTH SIDE OF STREET
CONCEPTUAL PLAN
PROPOSED BOAT LAUNCH &
FIREBOAT DOCK FACILITY

APPENDIX ONE

LIST OF CONTACTS

Roy Armstrong, Jr.
President

E. A. Bordeaux
Member

Bobby Britt

Richard Carpenter
Biologist

James Cobb
Public Education Officer

John Crew
Land Use Planning Coordinator

James Fox
Member

Charles Fullwood
Director of Field Operations

Ted Funderburk
Division Engineer

Edward V. Grace
Captain of the Port

Ms. Pat Hardy
Chairperson

Tommy King
General Chairman

Steve Lee
Chairman

Steve Lund

Donald J. Manley
Regional Director

Pender County Bass Club and
Eastern Regional Bass Federation

New Hanover Fishing Club
Wilmington

Power Boat Builder and Racer
Wilmington

N. C. Division of Marine Fisheries
Wilmington

Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla
Wilmington

N. C. DNRCD
Washington, N. C.

Ducks Unlimited
Wilmington

N. C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Raleigh

N. C. Department of Transportation
Wilmington

U. S. Coast Guard
Wilmington

1982 Riverfest Raft Race
Wilmington

Ducks Unlimited
Wilmington

Riverfest Invitational Regatta
Wilmington

Regulatory Function Branch
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
Wilmington

Eastern North Carolina Ducks Unlimited
Clinton

Ken McGee
President

John Murchison

W. E. Phillips
Assistant Chief

Dr. Fletcher Reiman

Dr. Al Roseman
Sponsor Chairman

Kenny Sprunt, Jr.
Member

Robert Stroud
CAMA Permit Officer

Lloyd Tyndall

Tony Williams
Wildlife Enforcement Officer

Sandy Wessell

Les Wyatt
Civil Engineer

New Hanover Fishing Club

Interested Citizen and Fishermen
Wilmington

Division of Boating
N. C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Raleigh

U. S. Power Squadron
Wilmington

Ducks Unlimited

Ducks Unlimited

N. C. DNRCD
Wilmington

Civil Engineer and Boater
Floodplain Management Section
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
Wilmington

N. C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Wilmington

Duck Hunter

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Wilmington

WILMINGTON MORNING STAR 1-2-83

Local/Region/State

Annexations burn firefighters, 4B

Planners determined to construct boat launch

By Beth Newsome
Staff Writer

The concept of building a boat launch along Wilmington's riverfront, bantered about sporadically since the 1940s, is still afloat thanks to a group of city planners who are continuing to look for an appropriate site and adequate funds.

The planners, working in conjunction with city engineering and property management officials, are now evaluating sites for a boat launch, said Arcelia Wicker, the city's associate director of planning.

Finding a site is complicated by the fact Wilmington doesn't want to build just an ordinary boat launch, Wicker said. "We're looking beyond the kind you see at Wrightsville Beach, for example."

It should have from two to four concrete boat ramps with catwalks, he said. In addition, the facility should have adequate lighting, benches, restrooms, shelters and picnic tables, he said. "It should help rejuvenate the riverfront between the two bridges." It would also provide a mooring for the city's fireboat.

In seeking a site, the planners are keeping in mind the need for adequate parking, he said, which is a major hassle at the existing makeshift boat launch at the foot of Nun Street.

They also want the new site to be easily accessible from the city's main streets, to have room for expansion and to provide temporary docking space for waiting boats, he explained.

Wilmington's riverfront plan lists two primary sites — Hilton Park and the foot of Castle Street — but Wicker said other sites also are under consideration. They include the Seaboard Coast Line site north of Cape Fear Technical Institute, just north of the N.C. State Ports Authority and the existing Nun Street site.

Making the Nun Street site a permanent boat launch might arouse the ire of residents whose homes are just a few yards away.

The idea of building a boat launch goes back at least to 1947, when it was part of a city plan, Wicker said. But due to other priorities, it has taken a back seat. The recent reawakening of interest in the riverfront and the proliferation of boats has resurrected the concept, he said.

Last March, the city applied for and in August received a \$12,000 state planning grant, matched by \$6,000 in local funds. After talking to state wildlife and fisheries experts as well as local fishing and hunting clubs, Wicker said he and his staff were able to confirm the need for a boat launch.

City staff picks site for boat launch, park

By Beth Newsome
Staff Writer

A 4-acre site at the foot of Castle Street, north of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge, has been designated by the city staff the best site for a proposed boat launch, park and fireboat dock.

The site is recommended in a report released by the city administration and approved unanimously by the Wilmington City Council Tuesday night. The property was selected from five possible sites.

It was chosen because its size would allow ample room for initial development and for expansion, the report said. It could also serve as a transition between the Historic District and the industrial area south of the bridge. It is, in addition, easily accessible from the intersections of U.S. 17/74/76, U.S. 421, Third Street and Front Street.

The other sites under consideration were near Hilton Park, Seaboard System Railroad property north of Cape Fear Technical Institute, a location between Nun and Church streets and the N.C. State Ports Authority's northern

tract.

Construction is expected to cost \$135,000, excluding land acquisition, the report says. The Castle Street site is owned by Pacific Molasses Co., which opposes its use as a boat launch, preferring to keep the property for expansion.

The city's only public boat access to the river is a steep ramp at the foot of Nun Street, hampered by lack of space, the street's steepness and overhanging wires.

"There is a confirmed strong demand for a boat launching facility on the Cape Fear River in Wilmington," the report said. The design should include two ramps, parking for up to 25 cars with trailers, enough room for maneuvering automobiles, courtesy docking and a separate tie-down area, according to the report. Trees and other amenities should be added to create a park atmosphere, it said.

The fireboat dock probably would not be constructed at first.

If constructed, the boat launch will be the fifth such facility in New Hanover County and the first developed by the City of Wilmington.

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City launches a good idea

One of the delights of Riverfest is the colorful confusion of pleasure boats on the Cape Fear River. So why aren't boats on the river at other times of the year?

Partly because you can't get there from downtown — unless you are the daredevil sort who wants to challenge his brakes and his nerves on the slippery cliff at the foot of Nun Street.

City planners would like to change that. They're trying to decide where a good boat launching facility might be built, complete with rest rooms and parking. It's a great idea.

True, the river, with its strong currents and tricky breezes, isn't likely to tempt many sailors. And power boaters will have to keep a sharp eye out for barges and freighters.

Still, the river is a scenic body of water that many boaters have never explored because it was too much trouble. Giving them launching ramps should not only put a few more boats on the Cape Fear, but give strollers and bench-sitters something else to look at.

The new riverfront park was a first step toward bringing the river back as Wilmington's scenic front yard. Boat ramps would give that effort another boost.